

**AVOID CRASHES:  
TOP CAR SAFETY  
FEATURES**

**HEALTHIER  
EATING DURING  
THE PANDEMIC**

**BEST AND WORST  
FURNITURE  
STORES**

✓ **REVIEWS & RATINGS**

Space Heaters

Budget Dishwashers

Midsized TVs

WiFi Extenders

Wireless Speakers

Wood Flooring

**CR** Consumer  
Reports®

HOW TO  
**PROTECT  
YOURSELF  
ONLINE**

STOP  
IDENTITY  
THEFT

LOCK UP  
YOUR CASH

KEEP  
HACKERS  
AWAY

PREVENT  
VIRUSES

**PLUS**

**MEDICAL ALERT  
SYSTEMS  
YOU CAN TRUST**

FEBRUARY 2021

# Trusted Advice Delivered Straight to Your Inbox

Sign up for our FREE email newsletters.



From Money, Home, and Cars to Food, Health, and Shopping, CR's **FREE** email newsletters are packed with the information you need to shop smart and stay informed.

Go to  
**[cr.org/getnewsletters](http://cr.org/getnewsletters)**  
to sign up today!

Money • Home • Cars • Shopping • Health • Food • What's New • Salud y Bienestar



## How to Find Great Furniture

Whether you're browsing in a store or online, here's the way to put quality pieces in your shopping cart.



P. 34

## PRODUCTS RATED IN THIS ISSUE



**STACKABLE COOKWARE**  
P. 10



**DISHWASHER DETERGENTS**  
P. 11



**SPACE HEATERS**  
P. 13



**WIFI EXTENDERS**  
P. 14



**TOYOTA RAV4 PRIME**  
P. 59



## 24 Your Essential Guide to Online Safety

Simple, effective steps to avoid hackers, sidestep scammers, and protect your private data. Plus: How to scrub your info from people-search websites.



## 34 The Best (and Worst) Places to Buy Furniture

Use our exclusive survey results, analyzing data from more than 38,000 of our members, to find furnishings you'll love at prices you can afford.

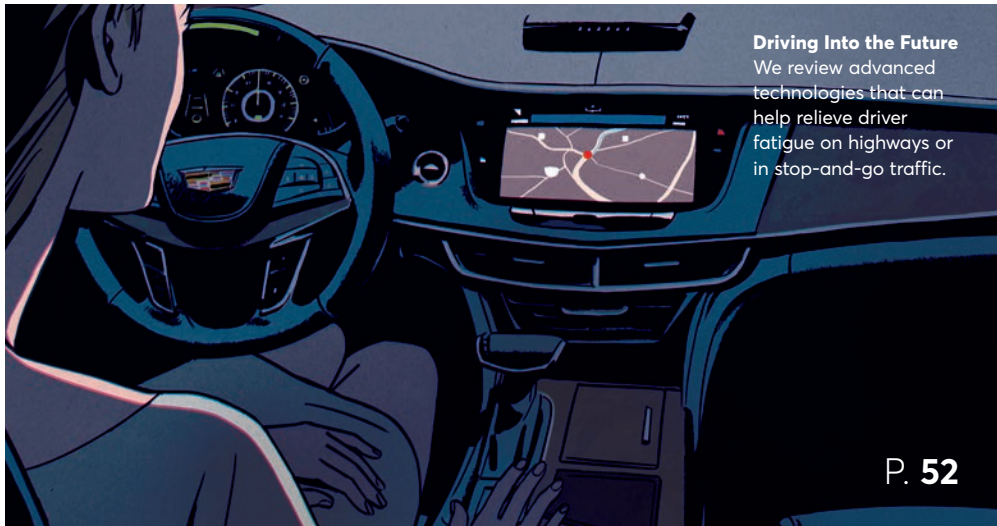
**RATINGS**



## 42 Eat Healthier—Even During a Pandemic

Our experts offer ways to get more nutritious and tasty foods into your daily diet, and our analysis of meal-kit services reveals which companies offer the best ones for your budget.

**RATINGS**



**Driving Into the Future**  
We review advanced technologies that can help relieve driver fatigue on highways or in stop-and-go traffic.

P. 52

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

**10 What We're Testing in Our Labs ...**

Midsized TVs, affordable dishwashers, prefinished wood flooring, and more.

**RATINGS**

**12 Ask Our Experts**

How to keep your car battery from dying when you're not driving much, whether a humidifier helps protect against the flu, and our best tips for grilling in winter.

**13 CR Insights**

Top-rated space heaters, ways to know whether that soup is healthy, and how to stream Super Bowl LV sans cable. Plus: Can a WiFi extender improve your signal?

**RATINGS**

PRODUCT UPDATE

**20 Get a Medical Alert System You Can Trust**

These devices get help in an emergency.

**RATINGS**



P. 20

IN EVERY ISSUE

**6 From the President: Our Privacy, Our Rights**

At CR, we want to ensure that you're making active, informed choices about your data and devices.

**7 Building a Better World, Together**

Protecting online privacy, curbing debt harassment, and holding Big Tech accountable.

**8 Your Feedback**

Readers' comments about our recent content.

**19 Recalls**

**62 Index**

**63 Selling It**

ROAD REPORT

**51 Ahead of the Curve**

Auto ratings, news, and advice.

**52 The Road to Self-Driving Cars**

We evaluate 17 active driving assistance systems, one of which you may encounter in your next car.

**RATINGS**

**58 Auto Recall Questions Answered**

Tens of millions of vehicles are recalled each year. Here's what you need to know to stay safe.

**59 Road Test**

We rate the Chevrolet Suburban, Land Rover Defender, Toyota RAV4 Prime, and Toyota Venza.

**RATINGS**

**ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS**

Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1936 that works side by side with consumers to create a safe, fair, and transparent marketplace. To achieve our mission, we test thousands of products and services in our labs each year and survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the

products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising.

In addition to our rigorous research, investigative journalism, and consumer advocacy, we work with other organizations, including media, consumer groups, research and testing consortiums, and philanthropic partners. We also license our content and data, as well as work with business partners to offer shopping and other consumer services, and may

receive fees from these programs. We maintain a strict separation between our commercial operations and our testing and editorial operations. Our testing and editorial teams decide which products to test and review; our external business partners or other third parties do not dictate or control these decisions. Lastly, these partnerships and programs do not constitute CR's endorsement of any products or services.

For more information, go to [CR.org/about](https://www.consumerreports.org/about).

**HOW TO REACH US**

Write to us at Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703, Attn.: Member Support. Or call 800-333-0663.

**TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR**  
Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://www.consumerreports.org/lettertoeditor).

**FOR NEWS TIPS & STORY IDEAS**  
Go to [CR.org/tips](https://www.consumerreports.org/tips).

For **Selling It** send items to

[SellingIt@cro.consumerreports.org](mailto:SellingIt@cro.consumerreports.org).

See page 63 for more details.

**ACCOUNT INFORMATION**

Go to [CR.org/magazine](https://www.consumerreports.org/magazine) or call 800-333-0663.

See page 5 for more details.

**RATINGS** Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100.

We rate products using these symbols:

❌ POOR    ✅ FAIR    🟡 GOOD  
🟢 VERY GOOD    🟠 EXCELLENT

# There's More to Your Membership

Keep Safe, Stay Informed,  
and Get the Latest Deals



CR Digital Archive



Best Time to Buy



Car Recall Tracker



TV Screen Optimizer



You Test



Share Your Story

Check them out, and more,  
at [cr.org/getbenefits](https://cr.org/getbenefits)



CRM12ASN



**Member Support** You can call us about your membership or donations at 800-333-0663.

**Or go to [CR.org/magazine](https://cr.org/magazine) to** • Renew or pay for your current magazine • Give a gift • Change your address • Report a delivery problem • Cancel your magazine

**Or write to us:** Consumer Reports Member Support  
P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298  
Please include or copy address label from issue.  
(Allow four to six weeks for processing.)

**Price** In U.S., \$6.99 per issue, special issues \$7.99.  
In Canada, \$7.99 CAN per issue, special issues \$8.99 CAN (Goods and Services Tax included, GST #1270-47702).  
All other countries add \$10 per year to the U.S. price for shipping and handling.

**Back Issues** Single copies of previous 24 issues, \$7.95 each; previous two Buying Guides, \$14.49 each (includes shipping and handling). Please send payment to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Member Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Other ways to get Consumer Reports on the go: Apple News+, Google Play, Kindle, Nook, Readly, and Zinio.

**Permissions** Reproduction of Consumer Reports in whole or in part is forbidden without prior written permission (and is never permitted for advertising purposes). For questions about noncommercial, educational/academic uses of our content, please submit requests to [CRreprints.com](mailto:CRreprints.com).

**Mailing Lists** We exchange or rent our print postal mailing list so that it can be provided to other publications, companies, and nonprofit organizations that offer products or services through direct mail. If you wish to have your name deleted from our list, please send your address label with a request for deletion from outside use to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. We do not exchange or rent email addresses. You can review our complete privacy policy regarding Consumer Reports information products, services, and programs at [CR.org/privacy](https://cr.org/privacy).

**Consumer Reports** (ISSN 0010-7174) is published monthly, except twice in December, by Consumer Reports, Inc., 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Periodicals postage paid at Yonkers, N.Y., and at other mailing offices; Canadian postage, at Mississauga, Ontario (Canadian publications registration number 2665247; agreement number 40015148). Title Consumer Reports is a federally registered trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Contents of this issue copyright © 2021 by Consumer Reports, Inc. All rights reserved under international and Pan-American copyright conventions.

**CR's No Commercial Use Policy** To view the policy, go to [CR.org/nocommercialuse](https://cr.org/nocommercialuse).

**Contributions** Consumer Reports is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. Contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with the law. Donations of commonly traded securities or real estate will be accepted and immediately converted to cash. For additional information, email [donorservices@cr.consumer.org](mailto:donorservices@cr.consumer.org). To donate, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Donor Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703 or go to [CR.org/donate](https://cr.org/donate).

**Charitable Gift Annuity** Establishing a Consumer Reports Charitable Gift Annuity is an ideal way to accomplish your personal financial goals while supporting the mission of Consumer Reports. For additional information, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or [legacy@consumer.org](mailto:legacy@consumer.org).

**Consumer Reports' Staff** operates under contract between Consumer Reports and The NewsGuild of New York Local 31003, CWA.

**Members** Send address changes to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. If the post office alerts us that your magazines are undeliverable, we have no further obligation to fulfill your magazines unless we have a corrected address within two years.

**POSTMASTER** Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 5071.5.2).

**NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES** Send address corrections to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298.

**CANADA POST** If copies are undeliverable, return to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 481, STN MAIN, Markham, ON L3P 0C4.



Consumer Reports is a member of Consumers International, a federation of more than 220 consumer organizations from more than 115 countries working to protect and empower consumers throughout the world. For information, go to [consumersinternational.org](https://consumersinternational.org).

**Please Remember CR in Your Will** For information about how to make a bequest to Consumer Reports, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or [legacy@consumer.org](mailto:legacy@consumer.org).



# Our Privacy, Our Rights



AS OUR LIVES have migrated more and more online since the onset of COVID-19, we have had to further wrestle with the concept of privacy and how it affects us every day. That means more than just the occasional worry that your child's teacher or an office colleague will catch a glimpse of the breakfast dishes on the countertop behind you when you appear on camera.

The bigger worry for all of us is learning that the online platforms we now use for work, school, and social get-togethers might not be keeping our communications or our data private. It's far past time for privacy to be an ironclad right and not simply an optional setting on our devices.

As Zoom ballooned from 10 million daily meeting participants in the months before the pandemic to more than 300 million in April, CR experts investigated, discovering a number of platform accountability and privacy concerns. To its credit, the company rectified most of the issues we unearthed. But its cooperation didn't change the fact that hundreds of millions of people had just jumped into a boat without checking to see whether it was seaworthy.

At CR, we want to ensure that you are making active choices about your data and your devices—and that companies that make smart products and platforms are designing them with your security and well-being in mind. We've helped win safeguards, such as the trailblazing California Consumer Privacy Act, to help provide you with stronger protections. And we will keep working hard to ensure that our nation's laws and policies build greater trust and accountability into the marketplace.

In this issue we have teed up some practical digital security tips that will allow you to protect your privacy, with "Your Essential Guide to Online Safety," on page 24. I hope you visit CR's new (and free) Security Planner, at [SecurityPlanner.org](https://SecurityPlanner.org), which will help you create an easy and personalized way to ensure that your online privacy, across devices and platforms, is yours alone to manage.

*Marta Tellado*

Marta L. Tellado,  
President and CEO  
Follow me on Twitter  
@MLTellado

President and CEO Marta L. Tellado

Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer Leonora Wiener  
Vice President, Chief Content Officer Gwendolyn Bounds

Editorial Director, Print Ellen Kunes

Deputy Editors, Print Amanda Lecky, Diane Umansky, Natalie van der Meer

Design Director Matthew Lenning

Creative Director, Brand Young Kim

Associate Design Director Mike Smith

Art Directors Tammy Morton Fernandez, Ewelina Mrowiec

Photo Editors Lacey Browne, Emilie Harjes, Karen Shinbaum

Senior Director, Content Development Glenn Derene

Deputy Director, Content Development Christopher Kirkpatrick

Associate Directors, Content Development Scott Billings, Althea Chang

Enterprise Editor Kevin Doyle

Senior Director, Content Impact & Corporate Outreach Jen Shechter

Special Projects Joel Keehn, Director; Margot Gilman, Associate Director;  
Lisa L. Gill, Rachel Rabkin Peachman, Brian Vines, Deputies; Ryan Felton,  
Donna Rosato, Writers

Editorial Director, Digital Erle Norton

Senior Director, Product Testing Maria Rerecich

Associate General Counsel Camille Calman

Director, Lab Operations Lilian Kayizzi

CARS: *Editors/Writers:* Keith Barry, Jeff S. Bartlett, Jonathan Linkov, Mike Monticello, Benjamin Preston *Auto Test Center:* Jake Fisher, Senior Director; Jennifer Stockburger, Director *Product Testing:* Michael Bloch, Steve Elek, Kelly Funkhouser, John Ibbotson, Chris Jones, Anita Lam, Gene Petersen, Ryan Pszczolkowski, Mike Quincy, Gabriel Shenhar, Shawn Sinclair, Emily A. Thomas, Joe Veselak

HEALTH & FOOD: Lauren F. Friedman, Content Lead *Editors/Writers:* Trisha Calvo, Kevin Loria, Catherine Roberts *Policy Lead:* Brian Ronholm

HOME & APPLIANCE: Eric Hagerman, Content Lead *Editors/Writers:* Daisy Chan, Mary Farrell, Paul Hope, Sara Morrow, Haniya Rae, Perry Santanachote, Daniel Wroclawski *Product Testing:* John Galeotafiore, Emilio Gonzalez, James Nanni, Testing Leads: John Banta, Susan Booth, Tara Casaregola, Lawrence Ciuffo, Enrique de Paz, Bernard Deitrick, Cindy Fisher, Misha Kollontai, Ginny Lui, Joan Muratore, Joseph Pacella, Christopher Regan, Frank Spinelli, Dave Trezza, Michael Visconti

MONEY: *Editors/Writers:* Octavio Blanco, Tobie Stanger, Penelope Wang *Policy Lead:* Anna Laitin

TECH: Jerry Beilinson, Content Lead *Editors/Writers:* Nicholas De Leon, Bree Fowler, Thomas Germain, Christopher Raymond, Allen St. John, Kaveh Waddell, James K. Willcox *Product Testing:* Richard Fisco, Testing Lead; Elias Arias, Antonette Asedillo, Steve Blair, Claudio Ciacchi, Charles Davidman, Cody Feng, Henry Parra, Richard Sulin, Maurice Wynn *Policy Lead:* Justin Brookman

Chief Scientific Officer James H. Dickerson

Food Safety James E. Rogers, Director; Tunde Akinleye, Amy Keating, Sana Mujahid

Content Operations Robert Kanell, Director

Copy Editing Leslie Monahan, Copy Chief; Noreen Browne, Alison France, Wendy Greenfield

Fact Checking & Research David Schipper, Associate Director; Tracy Anderman, Sarah Goralski, Christine Gordon, Karen Jacob, Jamison Pfeifer

Premedia William Breglio, Associate Director; Eugene Chin, William Hunt, Anthony Terzo

Production Nancy Crowfoot, Associate Director; Eric Norlander, Manager; Letitia Hughes, Terri Kazin, Aileen McCluskey

Photography John Powers, John Walsh

Imaging Francisco Collado, Mark Linder

Chief Research Officer Kristen Purcell

Consumer Engagement Testing Charu Ahuja, Director; Linda Greene, Dana Keester

Statistics & Data Science Michael Saccucci, Director; Debasmita Das, Kristen Dorrell, Dina Haner, Keith Newsom-Stewart

Survey Research Karen Jaffe, Simon Slater, Associate Directors; Dave Gopoian, Kendra Johnson, Debra Kalensky, Martin Lachter, Jane Manweiler, John McCowen, Adam Troy, Tian Wang, Tess Yanisch

Consumer Insight Selina Tedesco, Frank Yang

Member Support Sue Melfi, Director; Donna Murianka

Marketing Dawn Nelson, Senior Director

Procurement Operations Steven Schiavone, Associate Director

Administration Decarris Bryant, Dawn Yancy Elley

VICE PRESIDENTS: Financial Planning & Analysis JoAnne Boyd; Chief Digital

Officer Jason Fox; Advocacy David Friedman; Chief Intelligence Officer

Esther Han; General Counsel Michael Hubner; Research, Testing & Insights

Liam McCormack; Chief Human Resources Officer Rafael Pérez;

Chief Marketing Officer Lauren Stanich; Chief Social Impact Officer Shar Taylor;

SVP, Chief Financial Officer Eric Wayne

## Curbing Debt Harassment

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Debt collectors routinely contact consumers by phone, of course. But a new rule put in place by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau this past October will—starting in November 2021—explicitly let them do so by email, text message, and even social media messaging. It also lets collectors make up to seven calls to each person every week—more if they have multiple debts—and send unlimited electronic collection messages.

These changes are being made in the midst of a historic economic crisis. What's more, this new rule doesn't require debt collectors to verify that the money in question is still owed—even though they are notorious for trying to collect debts that were already paid or weren't owed in the first place.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR has been working to protect consumers from abusive debt collection practices for years. Among other things, we asked the CFPB to limit collection calls, require collectors to get a consumer's consent before emailing or texting, and ban all collections via social media.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Sign our petition urging the CFPB to stop debt collection harassment, and learn what to do if a debt collector contacts you, at [CR.org/debt0221](https://cr.org/debt0221).

## Crying Foul on Big Tech

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

A recent CR survey found that American consumers across the political spectrum are concerned about the

growing power of online platforms such as Amazon, Google, and Facebook. A clear majority said the government needs to step up oversight of these companies.

CR's nationally representative survey of 3,219 adult U.S. residents found that roughly 3 out of 4 Americans worry about the power wielded by today's biggest tech companies. Eight in 10 said Big Tech mergers and acquisitions unfairly undermine competition and consumer choice. Six in 10 support more government regulation, and 65 percent said the companies should be held accountable for the products and services sold on their online platforms. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed by CR said they were concerned about the amount of data being collected about them.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR advocates shared the findings with members of Congress who were conducting a bipartisan investigation into the power and practices of the biggest online platform giants.

When the House Judiciary



### PROGRESS UPDATE

CR is opposing a recently adopted Department of Energy rule that would create a new class of dishwashers for which the "normal" cycle would take 1 hour or less. The rule change not only is unnecessary—most dishwashers already have a quick-wash option—but **also could lead to new costs for both consumers and the environment.** That's because, counterintuitively, longer cycle times enable today's dishwashers to conserve energy. Today's most efficient dishwashers also perform extremely well: All 35 of the models that earned an Excellent Overall Score in CR testing also received an Excellent rating for energy usage.

Antitrust Subcommittee released its report, it identified a number of abuses of market power—and highlighted CR's survey findings.

"The House staff report lays out clearly how our online marketplace is increasingly stacked against us and is not serving consumers fairly," says Marta Tellado, president and CEO of Consumer Reports. "A handful of powerful companies are restricting and controlling the choices of everyone else."

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Sign CR's petition telling elected officials and regulators to hold Big Tech accountable, at [CR.org/bigtech0221](https://cr.org/bigtech0221).

## Protecting Online Data

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

The California Consumer Privacy Act, approved in 2018, is the only online privacy law in the U.S. that gives consumers the right to access, delete, and stop the sale of their personal information.

But the law wasn't working as planned: Companies were using loopholes to get around the restrictions and to deny consumer opt-out requests.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR has been working to address problems in the CCPA since it was signed. In October, for example, we published a report documenting companies' failure to comply.

And we threw our support behind Proposition 24, a California state ballot initiative designed to close many of the loopholes that companies were exploiting. In November, state voters approved it, and the reforms will be implemented over the next two years.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn more about CR's Digital Lab and our work for digital rights at [lab.cr.org](https://lab.cr.org).



### Hands Off

CR is defending consumers from debt collection harassment.



**“How Your Race Can Change Your Medical Care”** (December 2020) revealed that some lab tests give one result if a patient is Black and another if they’re not—and those different results can affect your treatment. Here, readers weigh in. To comment, go to [CR.org/med0221](https://www.cri.org/med0221).

THE PRACTICE OF across-the-board adjustments to medical test results based on race is outrageous. Dr. Roberts correctly dismisses “the idea that Black people as a race are distinguishable biologically—just because of their race—from other human beings.” It seems that these principles are not taught in medical schools. Yes, skin color is a genetic trait, as are “differences in measures of organ function,” resistance to malaria, and undoubtedly others. Dark skin, resistance to malaria, and high retention of

salt are more common in people of African descent, but they’re not caused by the same gene. You can’t take an individual with a particular shade of skin and predict resistance to malaria, the need to adjust a glomerular filtration rate (GFR) blood test score, or anything else. Medicine needs to be a lot more individualized than that. —Robert Moss, Bloomfield, NJ

BACK WHEN I was a scientist and biomedical research institute director, I recall political pressures forcing the National Institutes of Health to include nested subgroups (e.g., gender, race, etc.) in comparative studies to help assure more granular info on the effects of treatment interventions on individuals.

This approach was applauded because it was thought that it would improve both individual and overall outcomes. It necessitated larger (and thus more expensive) studies to assure adequate experimental and statistical power. So which is it? Do we disregard what we’ve learned about subgroups? Or do we replace inexpensive GFR screening [which indicates how fast a person’s kidneys can filter blood] as a queue qualifier and replace it with an approach that carefully measures every suspect individual’s GFR? And when it comes to some notable medical institutions dropping what they’ve learned from nested racial subgroups, does this make sense in terms of costs v. benefits? Consider

that the changes the author fronts could increase costs. —Michael Rethman, Prescott, AZ

**EDITOR’S NOTE** You ask: Do we disregard what we’ve learned about subgroups? The question may be: Is what we think we know about subgroups actually true? Because race isn’t a biological category, experts believe that it is not a good proxy for understanding differences in people’s kidney function. It may take time to find a good, cheap replacement for existing tests that use race adjustments—but that work is already being done (go to [CR.org/kidney0221](https://www.cri.org/kidney0221) for more information). And some scientists argue that using the existing (inexpensive) tests, sans the race factor, is accurate.

I’VE RECENTLY REALIZED that when the word “black” is used in print to recognize African-Americans as a racial group, it uses a capital “B” as in “Black.” But when “white” is used to recognize those of Caucasian race, I guess, “white” is not capitalized. You used this distinction in your article on how race can affect medical care. When did this change occur? Who made the determination? Or has it evolved as a consequence of increased awareness that Black lives matter? Just asking. —Tom Eells, Milwaukee

**EDITOR’S NOTE** We announced the style guide change in June following a thorough and thoughtful discussion on the use of terms in the style guide, specifically related to race. Like many other journalistic enterprises, CR has largely followed the AP style guide over the years, which had recommended lowercase for the adjectives “black” and “white.” CR makes adjustments as both language and society change. After careful consideration, we decided to change the editorial



WRITE

Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://www.cri.org/lettertoeditor) to share your comments for publication.



style to spell “Black” with a capital “B” when referring to a culture, ethnicity, or group of people who are part of the African diaspora. The style remains lowercase for “white,” as a physical description to describe light-skinned people, mostly of European descent, whose backgrounds may include many different cultures. In addition to CR, the AP, LA Times, New York Times, Boston Globe, Seattle Times, and NBC are among the many media outlets that have also made this style guide change. The change to our style guide is modest but meaningful. As an organization dedicated to the mission of fairness and justice, it is important for us to reflect and continually reaffirm our values.



## TV TROUBLES

REGARDING December 2020’s “Big Savings on Big Screens”: Your TV ratings data includes

## CONNECT WITH US

**FACEBOOK**  
fb.com/consumerreports  
fb.com/SomosCR

**YOUTUBE**  
/consumerreports

**INSTAGRAM**  
@consumerreports

**TWITTER**  
@consumerreports  
@SomosCR

**PINTEREST**  
/consumerreports

**LINKEDIN**  
/company/  
consumer-reports

“data privacy” and “data security” columns not mentioned in text. I don’t connect my “smart” TV to the internet, and it works just fine—handling cable, DVD, and Roku content. I avoid the TV snooping and don’t miss the TV’s remote voice control feature because I use a universal remote. The TV whines occasionally that it longs to go online, but I don’t let it. TVs should be TVs, not computers.  
—Gabriel Goldberg,  
Falls Church, VA

**EDITOR’S NOTE** All smart TVs can collect and share significant amounts of personal data about their viewers. And so can the third-party apps that work with the platforms. To help you protect your privacy, our experts made a guide for how to turn off data collection for LG, Samsung, Sony, and Vizio TVs, as well as Roku, Android TVs, and Amazon Fire TV Edition. Go to [CR.org/snoopingtv0221](http://CR.org/snoopingtv0221) for details.

MY TV IS A 46-inch Samsung. Just window shopping, but I was disappointed that “Big Savings on Big Screens” starts with 55 inches and up. Do those come with a larger house and an automatic raise? Reviews of smaller sizes would be much appreciated!  
—Bernard Leeds,  
Louisville, KY

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Though larger TVs are currently very popular (the most common screen size for a home’s primary television is now 65 inches), we test TVs of all sizes and prices. The best mid-sized TVs in our tests can still cost \$1,000 or more, but we identify a budget-friendly \$400 50-inch model in this issue on page 11. For more ratings of televisions, Digital and All Access members can go to [CR.org/tv0221](http://CR.org/tv0221).



## WHEN TO RETIRE YOUR TIRES

In “How to Choose the Right Tires ...” (December 2020), the info on when to replace tires doesn’t mention the effect of aging. My understanding is that tires deteriorate with age and should be replaced after about six years, even if there’s plenty of tread left. Is this valid?  
—Elda Banks,  
Silver Spring, MD

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Tires do age, risking cracks and other damage that can cause blowouts and flats. Some automakers say to remove tires after six years of use, and some tire manufacturers say 10 years of age, regardless of condition (it’s best to consult your car’s manual). But aging is more than the passing of time. If you live in a warm climate, drive on overloaded or underinflated tires, or drive at sustained high speeds, your tires can age more rapidly. If you’re not driving your car much this winter, turn to page 12 for more important tips.



## MONEY SAVERS

IN DECEMBER 2020’S “Practically Painless Ways to Spend Less Right Now,” you give examples of streaming services. In all these references to cord cutting, you never mention the value of cable. For people who don’t have tech expertise and can’t find anyone to help, getting on these streaming services can be hard. Cable provides a way to watch so many different programs, and there is always tech support to help.  
—Scott Cohen, Jackson, TN

“GET MORE MUSIC for Less Money” should include [accuradio.com](http://accuradio.com), a free service with a large selection of genres and sub-genres. You can’t specify a selection, but it provides unlimited free skips to the next song and no commercials! I’ve enjoyed it for years on my computer and phone.  
—David McMillin,  
The Woodlands, TX



## A SYMPATHETIC PET WEBSITE

REGARDING “Chewy vs. Amazon: Which Is Best for Pet Parents” (December 2020), my daughter’s family, longtime Chewy customers, recently lost their beloved 18-year-old cat. She notified Chewy to cancel a food delivery order. Two days later, a flower arrangement arrived ... from Chewy! A month later, Chewy sent a portrait of their cat, hand-painted on canvas! What an amazing, caring company.  
—Beth Morrill, Garner, NC

# What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

*In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.*

## Stackable Cookware Sets

**WE TESTED:** 5 sets

**WE TEST FOR:** How evenly the frying pan heats, how quickly water heats up in the largest pot of the set, cleaning ease, handle sturdiness under stress, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**

Median: 76  
Range: 70-81

### Best Overall Performance

Anolon SmartStack  
(nonstick 10-piece)  
\$400

**81**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



### Includes a Dutch Oven

T-Fal 10-piece Stackables  
Titanium (nonstick)  
\$100

**73**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



### Sturdy Stainless Steel Set

Calphalon Premier  
Space Saving (8-piece)  
\$400

**70**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



## Antivirus Software

**WE TESTED:** 34 products

**WE TEST FOR:** How well software protects against live attacks, ease of use including installation, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**

**WINDOWS** Median: 75  
Range: 41-82  
**MACS** Median: 66  
Range: 25-71

### Best Security for Windows

Eset Internet Security-2020  
\$70

**82**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



### Excellent Windows Protection, Free

Avira Free Security Suite  
\$0

**81**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



### Best Free Anti-Malware for Macs

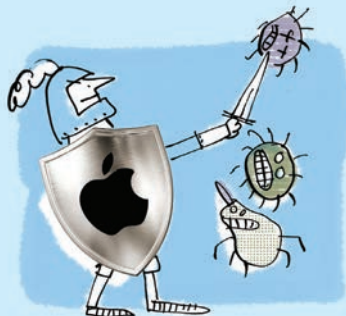
AVG Antivirus for Mac  
\$0

**67**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



Ask Our Experts

**I own a Mac computer, so I don't need antivirus software, right?**



LESS MALWARE IS aimed at Macs than at Windows PCs, says Rich Fisco, CR's lead tech tester, but the amount has been on the rise in recent years. While PCs have built-in antivirus software, Macs don't. So without additional protection, your computer could get a virus. You can even give malware to friends with PCs. "You can get an infected file and unknowingly pass it on to a PC with a simple email," Fisco says. Our experts recommend the AVG software, above, for Macs. Download software directly from trusted manufacturer sites. And never click on a pop-up ad promising free protection (a common scam), which could give you malware instead.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org).

## Midsized TVs

**WE TESTED:** 29 models  
46 to 52 inches  
**WE TEST FOR:** Picture quality of UHD and HD content including detail, color accuracy and contrast, viewing angles, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 60  
Range: 34-85

**Best Overall Picture Quality**  
LG OLED48CXPUB, 48"  
\$1,500

**85**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Reliable Brand & Great HDR**  
Sony XBR-49X950H, 49"  
\$1,000

**73**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Bargain Buy**  
Samsung UN50TU8000, 50"  
\$400

**66**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



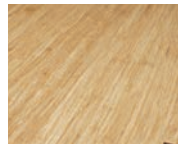
## Prefinished Solid Wood Flooring

**WE TESTED:** 12 products  
**WE TEST FOR:** Traction; ability to withstand scratches, dents, and UV light exposure; how quickly surface wear is noticeable from simulated foot traffic; and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 47  
Range: 35-71

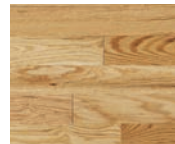
**Excellent at Resisting Scratches & Dents**  
Teragren Portfolio  
Naturals Heat  
\$7.50 per square foot

**71**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Great Traction for Less**  
Lumber Liquidators  
Bellawood Character Red Oak  
\$4.50 per square foot

**69**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Resists UV Light Damage**  
Armstrong Paragon  
Original Ember  
\$7 per square foot

**68**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



## Affordable Dishwashers

**WE TESTED:** 83 models  
24 inches wide  
**WE TEST FOR:** How well it washes dishes with baked-on food, how thoroughly it dries plastic items, energy use, noise, cycle time, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 70  
Range: 45-85

**Quickest Cycle**  
Whirlpool WDF520PADM  
115-min. cycle, \$520

**75**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Quiet Cleaner**  
Midea MDT24H3AST  
145-min. cycle, \$450

**69**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Reliable Brand at a Bargain**  
Ikea Lagan 00385804  
160-min. cycle, \$300

**67**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



## Dishwasher Detergents

**WE TESTED:** 20 products  
**WE TEST FOR:** How well a detergent removes caked-on food from glass dishes, and how well it prevents the deposit of minerals on dishes.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 76  
Range: 47-92

**Supreme Clean**  
Member's Mark (Sam's Club) Ultimate Clean  
Dishwasher Pacs  
10¢ per load

**92**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Cleans Plates Without Bleach**  
Cascade Platinum  
ActionPacs With Dawn  
36¢ per load

**91**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



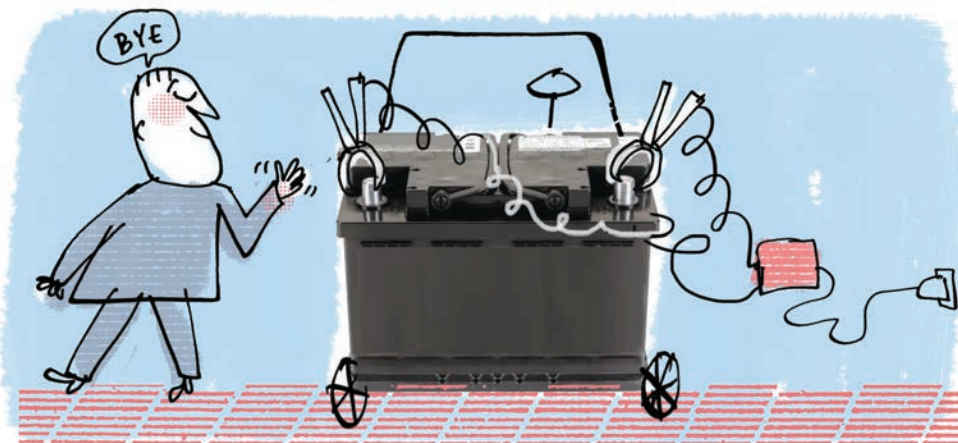
**Best Gel Detergent Deal**  
Great Value Dishwasher  
Gel (Walmart)  
5¢ per load

**74**  
OVERALL  
SCORE



**Note:** We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.

**COMING NEXT MONTH** Coffee Makers & More



## I'm not driving my car much this winter. How do I keep my battery from dying?

Car batteries need regular use to stay charged, so if you're not driving your car for an extended period of time—even just a week or two, in some cases—the battery may drain enough to keep it from starting. And a drained battery can void some battery warranties. To avoid the headache of a dead battery altogether, consider buying a “trickle” or “maintainer” charger: These are plug-in devices with clamps that attach to a car's battery terminals to keep it charged while parked.

Basic trickle chargers are inexpensive (usually less than \$50) and slowly replenish the car battery, but they need to be monitored and manually disconnected when the battery is fully charged. A maintainer charger is probably a better

bet: It aims to preserve the car battery's charge level, turning on and off as needed automatically, with no monitoring required. (The price is similar to that of a trickle charger.) There are even solar-powered versions if you park outdoors, away from power outlets.

Another benefit to these chargers, our experts say, is that they can maintain battery strength for more than just your car: They also do the job for lawn tractor and motorcycle batteries.

### Can a dehumidifier help protect me from the flu?

The best way to protect yourself from the flu is to get a flu shot, along with diligent hand-washing. But humidifying your indoor air may also be a good idea: There's evidence that the flu virus spreads more easily in dry air. For example, research has found that the virus is more easily transmitted through air when the humidity level is below 50 percent and less likely to

be transmitted when the air is more humid than that.

While this research isn't conclusive, using a humidifier is still a good idea, says Seema Lakdawala, PhD, an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Lakdawala advises keeping your indoor humidity levels between 40 and 60 percent to help reduce flu risks. (Just don't go above 60 percent; humidity levels that are too high may promote virus spread.) Other research has found that moderate humidity makes virus particles heavier—so they may hit the ground more quickly after being expelled by a cough or sneeze (and thus be less likely to be inhaled by you). The same principle may also apply to the coronavirus, though more research is needed there, Lakdawala says.

### Got any hot tips for grilling outside in the winter?

In past years, Super Bowl Sunday has been the most popular grilling day of the winter, with 23 percent of owners breaking out their grills for the festivities. But there are a few things to know before firing up your grill in the cold, our experts say.

“Don't expect it to behave

like it would in warmer weather,” says Larry Ciufo, who oversees CR's grill tests. Grilling in cold weather takes longer—preheating your gas grill can take twice as long. So first make sure that you have ample fuel on hand (and that the fuel tank is kept above freezing because otherwise the gas won't flow). Also make sure that your grill is clear of snow and that the lid and knobs aren't frozen shut. If they are, don't force them open; that could damage the grill. Instead let the grill defrost in a warmer spot, such as the garage—or use a hair dryer.

Then think carefully about where to set up your grill. Don't place it too close to the house—10 feet away is best for fire safety—and never grill in an enclosed space, such as a covered patio or a garage, because of carbon monoxide poisoning risks. Try to position the grill in a way that's shielded from wind, so the flames don't blow out on a gusty day. When you fire up the grill, the flame should typically burn mostly blue, not yellow. (Mostly yellow could indicate clogged air inlets or burners that need adjusting.)

Heat will escape every time you lift the lid, prolonging grilling time. An app-connected wireless meat thermometer lets you monitor the temperature, so you can make sure meat is thoroughly cooked without raising the lid. When you're finished, clean your grill while it's still hot; food debris is much harder to scrub off in the cold.



LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at [CR.org/askourexperts](https://www.consumerreports.org/askourexperts) ... and watch for the answers.



# CR Insights



## IN THE KNOW

### SPACE HEATER SOLUTIONS FOR CHILLY ROOMS

FIFTY-FOUR PERCENT OF people didn't have a home office before the pandemic, according to a recent survey of more than 2,000 consumers conducted by YouGov, in partnership with USA Today and LinkedIn. Since then, many remote workers have carved out new office spaces at home, perhaps in a far-flung nook or previously unused space. But as winter sets in, you may realize that you've picked a drafty—or downright cold—work spot. Want to know whether a space heater can help? In our tests, we've found many

stand-alone heaters that work well and kick off a good amount of heat—if you choose wisely.

First, decide whether you want the space heater to heat just you or warm up the whole room. Our tests find that not all models do both well. The oscillating Lasko model (shown at right) is a champ at keeping a large room warm, but it's not the best at keeping a person feeling toasty—also known as spot heating. We test space heaters by evaluating how well they warm a standard-sized living room in 15 minutes and

how well they spot-heat in 15 minutes. “Our spot-heating test uses a mannequin wired with sensors,” says CR engineer Chris Regan. “We want to know how your body will feel when you're sitting about 4 feet from the appliance.”

It's safest to keep heaters on the floor rather than on a table, and away from objects. Look for models with auto shut-off if the heater gets knocked over (included on all four shown here). Always plug a heater directly into a wall outlet, and never leave it running unattended.



QUIET SPOT HEATER WITH A 5-YR. WARRANTY

✓ **Vornado VMH600** \$160

OVERALL SCORE	86
ROOM HEATING	+
SPOT HEATING	+
FIRE SAFETY	+



LARGE ROOM HEATER ON WHEELS

✓ **Honeywell HZ-980** \$170

OVERALL SCORE	77
ROOM HEATING	+
SPOT HEATING	+
FIRE SAFETY	+



SLIM HEATER FOR BIG ROOMS

✓ **Lasko FH500** \$100

OVERALL SCORE	75
ROOM HEATING	+
SPOT HEATING	+
FIRE SAFETY	+

HOT BARGAIN FOR SMALL SPACES

✓ **Comfort Zone CZ499R** \$55

OVERALL SCORE	83
ROOM HEATING	+
SPOT HEATING	+
FIRE SAFETY	+



## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

### SHOULD YOU BUY A WIFI EXTENDER?

TO ANYONE STUCK at home with a slow, spotty internet connection, WiFi range extenders sound like the easy answer to a thorny problem: You buy one for as little as \$30, plug it into an outlet, and your problems will disappear. And extenders may indeed work if your goal is to just get WiFi in specific dead zones—like in your bedroom or an attic-turned-home office. But if you're looking to increase

coverage throughout your home, our experts say you should invest instead in an admittedly pricier mesh router system—often \$200 to \$500. (Go to [CR.org/mesh0221](https://www.crisp.org/mesh0221) to learn more.)

We tested six popular, low-cost WiFi extenders from companies that make some of the highest-scoring regular routers in our ratings, putting them to work in two 2,000-square-foot homes

owned by CR's testers. We found that WiFi extenders can improve your coverage by expanding the range of your network (see some of the best models from our tests, at right). But their effectiveness can be limited by a host of factors, says Rich Fisco, CR's lead electronics tester, including the distance between your router and the extender, the speed of your home internet connection, and the WiFi demands of your family.

In our testing, the extenders succeeded in expanding the reach of the WiFi signal into previous dead spots. But even then, our experts say extenders give you slower speeds—often about half the speed of your regular router. So, for example, if you stand next to your WiFi router where the signal is strongest and get 50 megabits per second (fast enough for 4K streaming), the speed in your extended network on the porch might be only about 25 Mbps (a speed more suitable for tasks like checking email or browsing the web). And that's with no thick walls or large appliances in the way. The bottom line? A good extender can bring WiFi to an otherwise dead

zone, but don't expect it to be as speedy as in the rest of your home.

### Two Expert Tips to Get the Best Results From Your Extender

1. Plug the extender into a power outlet midway between your router and the dead-zone area. If you place the extender too far from the router, you risk losing more signal speed than necessary; too close to the router, the signal may not reach the desired location. And note that walls and appliances can obstruct signals.
2. The mobile manufacturer apps designed to guide you through the setup process aren't that easy to use. Our testers were tripped up by unclear directions. Instead, we suggest you use a different method called Wi-Fi Protected Setup (WPS), which was available on all of the models we tested and links the extender to your router. Simply push the WPS button on the router, which will link the extender to the WiFi network without making you type in a username and password. Then just use the manufacturer's app to adjust the device settings to suit your needs.

PHOTOS, BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: CONSUMER REPORTS; OMAHA STEAKS; SHUTTERSTOCK; CONSUMER REPORTS; MIDDAGSFRID; INSTACART; SHUTTERSTOCK

## CR Time Traveler MEAL PREP



**1938** Electric ranges have many accessories to "suit the housewife's fancy," we report, including special racks, built-in alarm clocks, custom colors, and even cigarette lighters.

**1946** Precooked frozen foods "have a brilliant future," CR reports, with talk of new schemes such as a daily delivery of frozen meals to your door, perhaps in disposable dishes.



**1952** Omaha Steaks, which began as Table Supply Meat Co., a small butcher shop, begins its first mail-order venture, sending steaks direct to consumers' homes.



**1962** Our wine expert tries cans of frozen juice-concentrate cocktail mixers: Just defrost, shake, open, and mix. He even prefers Don the Beach-comber Original Frozen Fresh Daiquiri Mix to a freshly made daiquiri.



**1975** CR tests kitchen knives from 23 product lines. We find that carbon steel may rust faster than stainless—and a Wüsthof stainless set tops our recommended list.

### Netgear Nighthawk EX7000 \$140

4/5 2.4 GHZ

4/5 5 GHZ

4/5 RANGE

CLAIMS DUAL-BAND WIFI UP TO 1,900 MBPS

### D-Link DA1620 \$60 (shown at left)

4/5 2.4 GHZ

3/5 5 GHZ

4/5 RANGE

CLAIMS DUAL-BAND WIFI UP TO 1,300 MBPS

### TP-Link RE220 \$30

4/5 2.4 GHZ

3/5 5 GHZ

3/5 RANGE

CLAIMS DUAL-BAND WIFI UP TO 750 MBPS

### Linksys RE6300 \$60

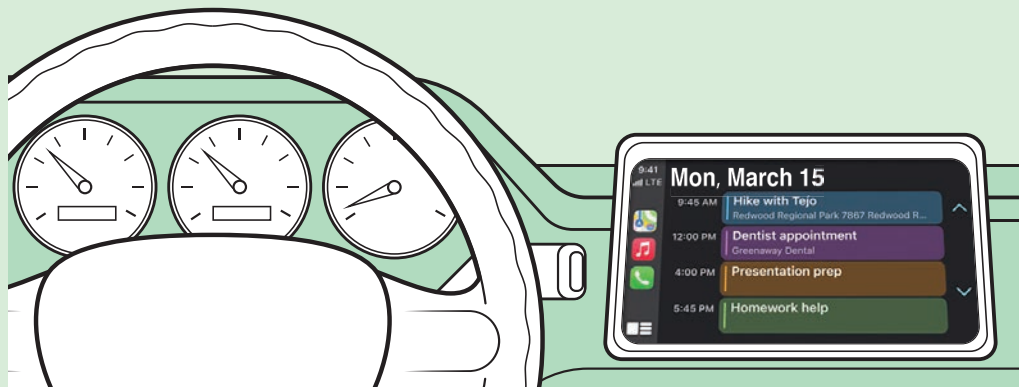
3/5 2.4 GHZ

3/5 5 GHZ

3/5 RANGE

CLAIMS DUAL-BAND WIFI UP TO 750 MBPS

For more information and models, Digital and All Access members can go to [CR.org/extend0221](http://CR.org/extend0221).



### CR TIME-SAVER

## SYNC YOUR SMARTPHONE TO YOUR CAR

TAKING THE TIME to truly integrate your smartphone with your car can make it faster, easier, and less distracting to access the information you need on the go. Just think: Instead of having to find your dentist's address and then type it into your car's navigation system, your car could already know

your phone's calendar, putting the directions to your appointment right at your fingertips.

Using smartphone apps in your car is particularly easy if your car came with Apple CarPlay or Android Auto—systems that seamlessly replicate some of your phone apps on your car's infotainment screen. To get directions to that appointment with CarPlay, for example, you'd simply say, "Siri, where is my noon appointment?" or manually tap the calendar icon on your CarPlay Dashboard, then tap on the appointment, which will allow you to get directions or

even to call to say you're running late. (Of course, this works only if you add location and contact info to your appointments when you enter them on your phone.)

If your car doesn't support CarPlay or Android Auto, you'll probably need to download the companion app that works with your car's infotainment system from the Apple or Google Play store. Look for an app that includes your vehicle brand name, such as myCadillac, FordPass, or Toyota Entune. Once the app is installed, connect your phone to the car to sync your data.

**1988** Sixty percent of U.S. kitchens now include a microwave. In our labs, we find that bigger microwaves tend to cook food faster: A small one can take 30 percent longer than a larger one.



**2007** In Sweden, Kikki Theander has an idea to deliver preplanned food bags with recipes. Her company, Middagsfrid, is claimed to be the first meal-kit service of its kind.



**2021** Demand for meal-kit services surges during the pandemic. We evaluate five popular meal-kit companies and find that Sun Basket has the largest number of different meal choices.



**1997** Food processors can take vegetables from grocery bag to salad bowl in record time, we report. But we advise that most people need only an inexpensive small model for basic tasks.



**2012** Apoorva Mehta starts the grocery delivery firm Instacart, which lets you pick out items online and uses personal shoppers to select and deliver them.



**Sun Basket** \$143.88 for three 4-serving meals per week, plus shipping

FACE-OFF

NEW (AND IMPROVED) BOOM BOXES



THESE UPDATED VERSIONS of the boom boxes of old are a great way to enjoy music indoors and out. The Ultimate Ears Hyperboom and Braven BRV-XXL/2 are some of the largest wireless models of speakers we've tested, weighing 13 and 17 pounds, respectively. Both boom boxes receive the highest marks in our sound-quality tests, topping CR's ratings of more than 40 portable models. That means you'll get clear sound, with a

robust bass, and enough volume for most listening situations. They also have easy-to-use controls and are claimed to be splash-proof. How to choose? For its slightly higher price, the Hyperboom offers longer battery life (a claimed 24 hours of play time) and features an optical input, which allows it to also serve as a TV sound bar. Though large, its vertical orientation doesn't take up much space.

And the subdued styling makes it easy for it to blend in with most décor. The Braven, on the other hand, looks more like one of the original boom boxes. It's clearly made to be toted around with its sturdy and comfy carrying handle and over-the-shoulder carrying strap. (It even features a magnetic bottle opener.) And it delivers similarly great sound for \$100 less than the Hyperboom.



✓ Ultimate Ears Hyperboom  
\$400  
63  
OVERALL SCORE



✓ Braven BRV-XXL/2  
\$300  
61  
OVERALL SCORE

^	SOUND QUALITY	^
!	EASE OF USE	!
^	VERSATILITY	^
24 HR.	CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE	18 HR.

For more ratings of portable speakers, Digital and All Access members can go to [CR.org/speakers0221](https://www.consumerreports.org/speakers0221).

FEBRUARY IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...



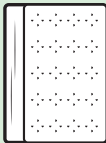
SMARTPHONES



SPACE HEATERS



SNOW BLOWERS



MATTRESSES

For more info, go to [CR.org/buy0221](https://www.consumerreports.org/buy0221).



FOOD IQ™

# WHAT'S INSIDE STORE-BOUGHT MINESTRONE SOUP?

COMFORT, CONVENIENCE, healthfulness, and flavor are all reasons that consumers turn to soup from the super-market. And though a steaming bowlful can deliver on all those attributes, finding soups that are both healthy and tasty is not so easy. “The main nutritional concern with packaged soups is sodium—soup is the fourth-largest source of sodium in the U.S. diet,” says Amy Keating, RD, a Consumer Reports nutritionist. “Yet many people think less salt means less flavor.”

But does it? CR’s nutrition experts evaluated the nutritional information for 16 packaged (canned, jarred, pouches, and refrigerated) minestrone soups—which should be good for you, given their combo of vegetables and beans. They eliminated the ones with the very highest sodium levels and chose eight low- to moderate-sodium soups for our sensory panel’s blind taste test (these ranged from 45 mg to 650 mg of sodium per cup).

“Even if it tastes amazing, you’re better off skipping soups with over 700 mg of sodium per cup (meaning the full can could be over 1,000 mg—about half the amount you should have in a day),” Keating says. And you can still get great-tasting soup with lower-sodium counts: In our taste test, the three soups shown below came out ahead of the pack.

## You Do Need Some Salt

The best-tasting packaged soups contained neither the highest nor the lowest amounts of sodium—they had between 510 and 630 mg. Those we tried on the lower end of the sodium spectrum, Health Valley No Salt Added Organic Minestrone (45 mg per cup) and Tabatchnick Low Sodium Minestrone (55 mg per cup), tasted bland. But their flavor was greatly improved when we added ⅛ teaspoon of salt per serving to each soup. “That increased the sodium count to just 340 mg for Health Valley and 350 mg for Tabatchnick, still lower than most packaged soups,” Keating says.

## Look Outside the Can

Though cans take up a majority of the shelf space in a typical supermarket soup aisle, our top-tasting soups actually came in glass jars, frozen, or refrigerated. In canning, the soup is processed under high heat, and sometimes that strips



away flavor or leaves veggies mushy. An easy way to amp up the flavor of canned soups is to stir in some fresh or frozen vegetables, herbs and spices, sautéed garlic, or a hit of acid, such as lemon juice or a small amount of vinegar or wine.

## Consider Making Your Own

In addition to the store-bought soups, our taste test also included a homemade minestrone (190 mg of sodium

per cup) cooked up in CR’s test kitchen. Perhaps, not surprisingly, it was judged to be the best-tasting: “Excellent flavor and texture” is how our testers summed it up. “The vegetables and pasta were al dente, and you could taste the individual vegetables,” Keating says. The real surprise? It was super-easy to make. Go to [CR.org/minestrone](https://www.consumerreports.org/minestrone) for the recipe; you can use a multi-cooker or the stovetop.



**Tabatchnick Minestrone**  
15 oz., \$2.50

CALORIES	110
SATURATED FAT	0 g
FIBER	5 g
PROTEIN	5 g
SODIUM	510 mg

Notes: Thick and hearty tomato-based soup with plentiful and slightly firm vegetables and beans, and well-blended seasonings.



**Trader Joe's Organic Hearty Minestrone**  
20 oz., \$4

CALORIES	100
SATURATED FAT	0 g
FIBER	3 g
PROTEIN	4 g
SODIUM	630 mg

Notes: Tomato-based broth with bold flavors, especially rosemary. Our tasters found that the vegetables and beans had good texture.



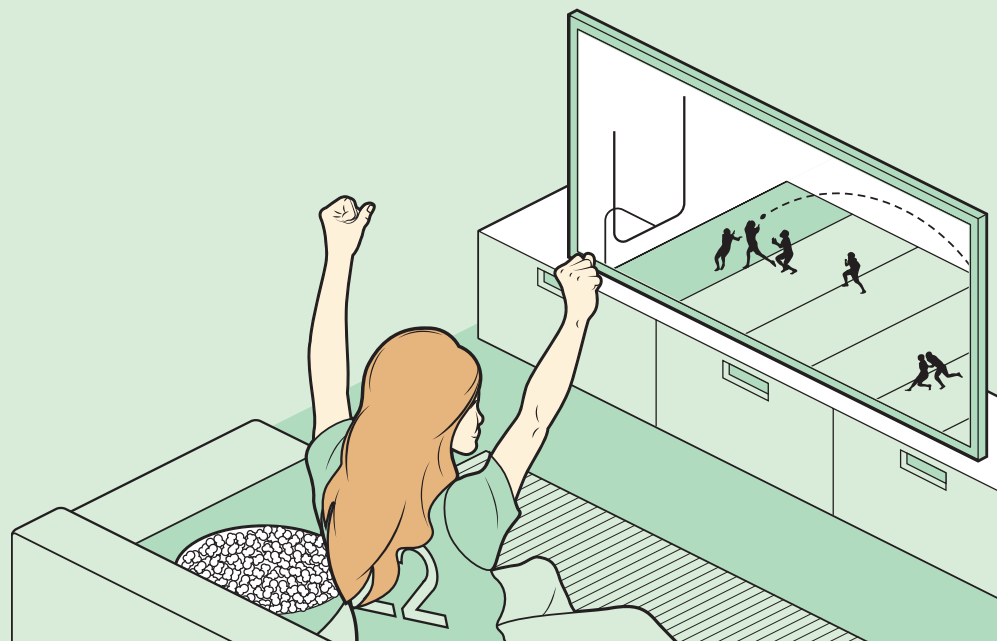
**Zuppa Rustica Minestrone**  
19.4 oz., \$7

CALORIES	330
SATURATED FAT	2 g
FIBER	10 g
PROTEIN	11 g
SODIUM	530 mg

Notes: Vegetable broth-based (no tomato) with beans and finely chopped cabbage and other vegetables. Big cabbage and bean flavors with a hint of olive oil.

## CR SMART SOLUTION

# HOW TO WATCH THE SUPER BOWL WITHOUT CABLE



GIVEN THE RISING COST of cable service, a lot of us have ditched our traditional pay-TV providers in favor of lower-cost alternatives, such as using an antenna or streaming services. In fact, according to investment research firm MoffettNathanson, about 6.3 million people dropped their cable or satellite TV service in just the past 12 months.

But cutting the cord doesn't necessarily mean missing out on all the big-game action at Super Bowl LV, which is set to kick off at 6:30 p.m. ET on Feb. 7, 2021, in Tampa Bay, Fla. Once again, the Super Bowl will be broadcast on

CBS, and for the third time ESPN Deportes will air a Spanish-language broadcast of the game. There are several ways to get the CBS coverage free of charge. One is to use an antenna, provided you get reception in your area. Look below for a few of the top antennas from our testing, and check TV reception maps on the FCC's website—at [fcc.gov/media/engineering/dtvmaps](http://fcc.gov/media/engineering/dtvmaps)—to see which stations are available in your area.

If you're okay with watching the game on a smartphone, laptop, or tablet, CBS is also streaming the Super Bowl free on [cbssports.com](http://cbssports.com), or through

the free CBS Sports app. Other free small-screen options include the NFL app—which used to be exclusive to Verizon customers but is now available to everyone free of charge—or the Yahoo Sports app for smartphones, also free.

But if you want to stream the Super Bowl on your big-screen TV, you'll either need to own a smart TV with the CBS Sports app on it or have a media streaming device such as an Apple TV or Roku, which will give you access to the free CBS Sports app. Otherwise, you can sign up for a paid live TV streaming subscription service. CBS' own CBS All Access subscription service,

for example, costs \$6 a month and also gives you access to other CBS content, such as the CBS original series "Star Trek: Picard."

The CBS broadcast of the game will also be available on several other paid streaming subscription services, namely AT&T TV Now, fuboTV, Hulu + Live TV, and YouTube TV. ESPN Deportes is available as an add-on to many of these services for an additional fee. But note that live CBS broadcasts aren't available in every market, so be sure they're offered in your area first. All of these streaming services also have free trials, so you can check them out ahead of time.

## TOP ANTENNAS IN OUR TESTS

**Winegard  
FlatWave  
Amped  
FL5500A**  
\$60



PERCENTAGE OF STATIONS RECEIVED

77%

PERCENTAGE OF UHF/VHF STATIONS RECEIVED

UHF **80%** VHF **61%**

AMPLIFIED: YES

**ClearStream  
2Max**  
\$100



PERCENTAGE OF STATIONS RECEIVED

75%

PERCENTAGE OF UHF/VHF STATIONS RECEIVED

UHF **66%** VHF **63%**

AMPLIFIED: NO

**1byone  
Digital  
Amplified  
Indoor HD**  
\$20



PERCENTAGE OF STATIONS RECEIVED

74%

PERCENTAGE OF UHF/VHF STATIONS RECEIVED

UHF **81%** VHF **35%**

AMPLIFIED: YES



## RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT [CR.ORG/MORE](https://www.consumerreports.org/more).



### HYUNDAI VEHICLES

Hyundai announced a recall of almost 130,000 vehicles, including 2012 Santa Fe SUVs, 2011-2013 and 2016 Sonata Hybrids, and 2015 and 2016 Veloster hatchbacks, because of an engine defect. A vital part inside the engine—called a connecting rod bearing—may wear prematurely. If this happens, drivers may notice an abnormal knocking noise from the engine and/or illumination of the oil pressure warning light, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Left unrepaired, the defect could cause the vehicle to abruptly lose power while driving, and may cause an oil leak that could lead to a sudden fire. Recalled cars may need a total engine replacement to fix the problem. This recall is part of a larger investigation that NHTSA opened into Hyundai and Kia vehicle fires in 2019 (both manufacturers are owned by the same corporate parent and share parts and designs). **What to do:** Owners can schedule an appointment for a repair at Hyundai's website or contact the manufacturer at 855-371-9460. Hyundai dealers will inspect the engines of affected vehicles for damage and will replace the engine, if necessary, free of charge.

### SONOMA GOODS CANDLES

Kohl's is recalling about 512,000 Sonoma Goods For Life three-wick candles because the candles' high flames can ignite the surface of the wax or cause the glass to break, posing fire and burn hazards. The candles were sold at Kohl's stores and website from December 2019 through October 2020 for about \$20. **What to do:** Stop using the candles and return them to the nearest Kohl's store. Consumers with a receipt will be given a full refund, and those without a receipt will get a store credit. Call Kohl's at 855-564-5755 or go to [kohls.com](https://www.kohls.com) for details.

### YETI TRAVEL MUGS

Yeti is recalling about 241,500 Rambler 20-ounce travel mugs with Stronghold lids because the magnet slider over the drinking opening on the lid can eject and hot contents can spill out, posing injury and burn hazards. The mugs were sold at Yeti stores and online at [yeti.com](https://yeti.com) during October 2020 for about \$35.

**What to do:** Stop using the mug and go to [yeti.com](https://yeti.com) or call Yeti at 833-444-3151 for instructions on returning the lid for a full refund.

### CAT & JACK TODDLER BOOTS

Target is recalling about 122,500 Cat & Jack "Himani" and "Jaren" toddler boots because the toggle on the boot can detach from the lace, posing a choking hazard for children. The boots were sold at Target stores and online at [target.com](https://target.com) and Google Express from September 2019 through February 2020 for about \$30.

**What to do:** Take the boots away from children and return them to any Target store for a full refund. If you purchased the boots on [target.com](https://target.com), contact Target at 800-440-0680 or go to [target.com](https://target.com) for a prepaid return label.

### ZINUS BUNK BEDS

Zinus is recalling about 26,000 metal bunk beds because the welds that secure the upper bunk can come apart, causing the upper bunk to collapse, posing fall and injury hazards. The beds were sold on Amazon, [homedepot.com](https://homedepot.com), Overstock, [walmart.com](https://walmart.com), Wayfair, and [zinus.com](https://zinus.com) from December 2016 through January 2020 for \$90 to \$240.

**What to do:** Stop using the upper bunk. Call Zinus at 800-613-1225 or go to [zinus.com](https://zinus.com) for details and instructions on receiving a free repair kit with reinforcement brackets or a full refund.

### OAKMONT FIRE PIT TABLES

Sunjoy is recalling about 10,900 Oakmont LP fire pit tables due to an incorrectly installed part that could ignite, posing a fire hazard. The tables were sold at Big Lots stores and online from January 2020 through June 2020 for about \$480.

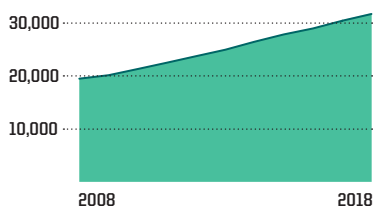
**What to do:** Stop using the table. Call Sunjoy at 866-578-0101 or go to [oakmont.sunjoygroup.com/](https://oakmont.sunjoygroup.com/) service for part replacement details.

### SAFETY UPDATE: PREVENTING FURNITURE TIP-OVERS

Since 2000, more than 200 people—mostly children ages 6 and younger—have been killed when a dresser or other furniture that stores clothes has tipped over, a CR investigation found. While CR believes furniture should be more stable in the first place and we are pushing for legislation that would create strong, mandatory federal standards, anchoring your furniture as soon as you get it is essential to protect everyone in your home. Anchoring kits are typically comprised of two brackets tethered by a strap or cable that secures the furniture to the wall to prevent tip-overs. Right now, however, many homes don't make use of these kits. Among CR's survey participants who purchased furniture that can be anchored (dressers, bookcases, TV stands), low percentages said they've anchored them in their homes—just 15 percent overall and 37 percent among those with young children.\* To make anchoring as easy as possible, CR has created a step-by-step guide at [CR.org/tipover0221](https://www.consumerreports.org/tipover0221). And if you're in the market for new furniture, turn to "The Best (and Worst) Places to Buy Furniture," on page 34 of this issue.



Number of deaths from falls among adults 65 and over



Source: CDC and National Center for Health Statistics.

# PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

## Get a Medical Alert System You Can Trust

These devices can help you summon assistance in an emergency.

by Catherine Roberts

Necklaces, a wristband, and a watch, as well as a wall button and base unit, all components of medical alert systems from Bay Alarm Medical, our top-rated brand.



C

**ONCERNED ABOUT FALLING** or needing help with a health problem when you're alone? Consider a medical alert system. A call button on these devices—which

are typically worn as a wristband or necklace, or clipped to your clothing—will connect you with a dispatcher who can call for emergency help or contact a friend or family member.

“Anyone who is at risk of falling or having a medical emergency” may benefit from such a device, says Leah Hess Bellman, an occupational therapist who works as an analyst at Commonwealth Care Alliance in Boston.

If you're considering a medical alert system, the wide variety of features, service options, and fees can make it challenging to figure out which one is best for you. The choices can be even more overwhelming if you're buying it for a loved one.

To start with, you may wonder whether you can simply rely on the technology you already have, such as a smartphone or smart speaker. Probably not, the experts say.

That's because it's unlikely that you have your smartphone with you all the time, says Mindy Renfro, PhD, an associate professor in the school of physical therapy at Touro University Nevada in Henderson. It's easy to get up from a chair and leave the phone behind. “If you don't have an emergency response system on your body that is going to stay on your body, you're at risk,” she says. Plus, unlike devices that aren't designed specifically for emergency use, when monitored medical alert systems are activated, they connect users to a live, trained person 24/7.

Renfro suggests that if possible you enlist the help of an occupational or physical therapist to help you find



### 3 SHOPPING TIPS

#### CHECK RETURN POLICIES

Medical alert devices are often rented, and even when a company allows you to cancel your monthly service easily, you usually have to send the equipment back. Return policies may be an especially important consideration if you have hearing loss, says Mindy Renfro, PhD. That's because you'll need to be able to set a device's volume high enough to hear the person on the other end of the line at a call center without a hearing aid. (You might not be wearing your hearing aid if you fall at night, for example.) Volume settings can generally be tested only after purchase.

**ASK FOR A DEAL** When you contact a manufacturer, you may want to ask for a better price than the one that's listed. A few companies told us they allow their salespeople to offer discounts.

#### TAKE CARE IF BUYING FOR OTHERS

When you're buying a medical alert system for a loved one, ask which kind of product they would wear and use, and which features they would like. “You don't surprise someone with one of these,” Renfro says. “It's not a gift option.”

the right device for your situation. As you review CR's exclusive ratings, there are key questions to think about before you buy one of these potentially lifesaving systems.

### Home-Based or a Mobile System?

Originally, medical alert systems were designed to work inside the home with a landline telephone. You can still go this route. Many companies now also offer the option of home-based systems that work over a cellular network for those who may not have a landline.

With home-based systems, pressing a wearable call button allows you to speak to a dispatcher through a base unit in your home (as long as you're close enough to it).

But many companies now offer mobile options over cellular networks, too. You can use these systems at home, but in addition they allow you to call for help while you're out and about. They also incorporate GPS technology (generally for an additional monthly fee), so that if you get lost or press the call button for help but are unable to talk, the service can find you.

Someone who is frail and doesn't leave the house often may not need a mobile system. But an active older adult may want added protection outside the home, says Richard Caro, PhD, a co-founder of Tech-Enhanced Life, a company that evaluates and reviews products for older people.

### Monitored or Unmonitored?

All of the systems in our ratings are monitored, meaning that the call button will connect you with someone at a 24/7 dispatching center.

But there are medical alert systems that aren't monitored. With these, when you press the call button the device automatically dials a friend or family member on your programmed emergency call list, rather than connecting you with a dispatcher.



These products can often be set up to contact 911 if you don't get an answer from someone on your list.

A key difference between the two systems is price. Monitored systems carry a monthly fee in addition to the cost to purchase or rent the device. With unmonitored systems, you generally pay only for the device itself. Monitored systems may also have other fees, such as activation fees or device fees. And cancellation, return, and refund policies vary from company to company. (See "How the Brands Compare," below.)

## Fall-Detection Feature or Not?

Some companies offer the option of automatic fall detection for an additional monthly fee. Manufacturers say devices with this feature can sense falls when they occur and automatically contact the dispatch center, just as they would if you had pressed the call button.

But that might not work perfectly every time, says Neil Alexander, MD, a professor of geriatric and palliative medicine at the University of Michigan and director of the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center.

In some cases, for instance, this feature may register something as a fall that isn't, such as dropping the device.

The companies we looked at that offer fall detection charge \$15 or less for it per month, so the cost isn't much. But if you're at high risk for falls, be aware that this feature isn't foolproof and can lead to accidental activations, a common problem among users.

## What About Unintended Calls for Help?

In a survey of 1,869 Consumer Reports members, 62 percent said they had

## HOW THE BRANDS COMPARE

All of the brands in CR's reader survey received very good overall satisfaction ratings, so choosing among them may hinge on specific features, policies, and category ratings. Note that the devices pictured here represent some but not all of those offered by a brand, and that the customer service hours listed are for nonemergency calls.

### MobileHelp

84 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** CR members said MobileHelp was one of the most prone to accidental activations.

**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$20-\$48

**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** No commitment or contract. Full refund if you cancel in the first 30 days. Prorated refund, minus shipping costs, if you cancel after the first 30 days and return equipment.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST Monday-Friday; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST Saturday.

**CONTACT INFO:** mobilehelp.com; 800-764-2091.

### Bay Alarm Medical

85 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** Although it was the leader in overall satisfaction, Bay Alarm Medical was the least commonly owned brand in our ratings.

**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$20-\$50

**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** No commitment or contract. Full refund, minus shipping costs, if you cancel in the first 30 days.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST Monday-Friday; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. PST Saturday and Sunday.

**CONTACT INFO:** bayalarmmedical.com; 877-522-9633.

### Philips Lifeline

83 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** Philips Lifeline got a mark of Very Good for initial price satisfaction.

**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$30-\$59

**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** No long-term commitment or contract. No service cancellation fee or return shipping fee. Mobile pendant can be returned for a full refund within 30 days.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 8 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST Monday-Friday; 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EST Saturday.

**CONTACT INFO:** lifeline.philips.com; 800-566-6218.

accidentally activated their medical alert device. (Accidental activations were actually more common than intentional ones.) Of those respondents, 32 percent of those with fall detection said their device had incorrectly registered a fall.

But in the case of a button pressed accidentally or a wrongly detected fall, most devices have a cancel button, says Laurie Orlov, the founder of Aging and Health Technology Watch, which conducts market research. Be sure you and your loved ones know where that button is and how to use it.

If an activation isn't canceled right away, there are still a few exit ramps before emergency help is dispatched. First, monitored devices will connect to a call center. If you're okay, you can simply tell the dispatcher that it was an accidental activation.

In a situation where you can't be reached, the call center will go down a list of predesignated emergency contacts, which is why it's critical to populate that list carefully during setup. Emergency responders will be dispatched only if no one is reachable.

A frequent concern many older people have is that an accidental activation will lead to the fire department showing up and breaking down their door, Orlov says.

"Setting up your device properly can mitigate that fear," she points out.

To learn more about the proper setup of a medical alert system, keep in mind that most manufacturers provide phone support as part of the subscription or purchase, which covers installation questions as well as general best practices.

*Additional reporting by Laura Entis.*

## GreatCall

82 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** This was the only brand to get an Excellent rating for response speed. But CR members said it was the most likely to malfunction.  
**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$25-\$40  
**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** No commitment or contract. No cancellation fee. If returned in the first 30 days, users are refunded except for shipping costs and a \$10 restocking fee.  
**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. PST Monday-Saturday; 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. PST Sunday.  
**CONTACT INFO:** greatcall.com; 866-359-5606.

## Medical Alert

80 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** Medical Alert scored slightly lower on measures of professionalism and customer service at purchase than the other brands did.  
**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$20-\$50  
**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** No long-term contract. No cancellation fee. Full refund minus shipping costs if you cancel in the first 30 days.  
**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST Monday-Friday; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST Saturday and Sunday.  
**CONTACT INFO:** medicalalert.com, 800-800-2537.

## Medical Guardian

81 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** Medical Guardian devices were the only brand in our survey more likely to be activated intentionally than unintentionally.  
**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$30-\$55  
**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** No commitment or contract. No cancellation fee. If you cancel within 10 days, you'll receive a full refund minus a \$50 restocking fee.  
**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. EST Monday-Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST Saturday.  
**CONTACT INFO:** medicalguardian.com; 800-668-9200.

## Life Alert

80 READER SCORE



**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:** Life Alert's rating of customer service since purchase was the second lowest. According to the company, fall detection isn't offered.  
**MONTHLY SERVICE PRICE RANGE:** \$49-\$68  
**CANCELLATION AND RETURN POLICY:** A 36-month service agreement (void if user dies or requires 24/7 care). Cancellation fee and refund varies.  
**CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS:** 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST Monday-Friday; 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. PST Saturday; 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. PST Sunday.  
**CONTACT INFO:** lifealert.com; 800-360-0329.

---

# YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ONLINE SAFETY

---

## **PART 1**

"I TRIED TO GET MY  
NAME OFF PEOPLE-  
SEARCH SITES. IT WAS  
ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE."  
**P. 26**

## **PART 2**

SCRUBBING YOUR  
INFO FROM PEOPLE-  
SEARCH SITES  
**P. 29**

## **PART 3**

YOUR DIGITAL SECURITY  
ACTION PLAN  
**P. 30**



**In recent years,** we've been spending more and more time online. That has only increased since the pandemic, which has required many of us to work, shop, and socialize through our screens. We're thankful for the technological innovations that allow this, but there are risks: Hackers and scammers are ever more sophisticated at gaining entry to digital accounts and devices, which can cost consumers dearly in time, money, and hassle. Privacy is also a concern. If you, like many people, are unsure what can really help you stay more secure online, CR offers simple and effective steps.

---

BY THE CONSUMER REPORTS EDITORS / ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARRY CAMPBELL





## PART

## 1

# "I TRIED TO GET MY NAME OFF PEOPLE-SEARCH SITES. IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE."

by Mara Hvistendahl



**AS A CHILD** in the 1980s, I remember staring at my mother's listing in the white pages, which back then was an actual book issued by the phone company and printed on white paper. The entry revealed our phone number, but the address line was blank, and the spot for a first name held only my mother's initial. She was single and working as an immigrant-rights advocate in Minneapolis. Before omitting her address, she'd gotten hate mail. She worried about being targeted by creeps. "I don't want people to think that it's a woman living here alone," she told me.

A generation on, women and vulnerable groups can add online harassment to the threats faced by our mothers and grandmothers. As a journalist I have covered conspiracy theorists, white supremacists, and

militant nationalists, and like many women who occupy public positions, I've been the target of vicious social media and email messages. Some of the reactions to 2020's Black Lives Matter protests underscored that the threat faced by women of color is even more acute. And yet, as I discovered when I tried to conceal the details of my life from public view, going unlisted is now a herculean task.

People-search sites such as Intelius, MyLife, and Spokeo number in the hundreds, collecting data on most of us. The modern-day descendant of the phone book, these data brokers scrape phone numbers, email addresses, and lots of other personal information from public records, then sell it online to anyone with a credit card. When I Googled my name last year, the search results filled several pages. The sites even hawked an address where I lived for a short time 15 years ago.

People-search sites can be useful. They help police locate suspects, reconnect people with long-lost friends, and aid adoptees in finding their birth parents. I have used them myself as a reporter to find contact information for sources.

But these sites can create serious hazards, too. They often encourage voyeurism with come-ons such as

"Arrest Records, Marriage Records, Contact Information and More!" and "We've uncovered sensitive personal information about Mara." They can be used to commit identity theft and to "dox" people, publicizing sensitive or personal information to make someone a target for harassment or violence. They can also lead stalkers to victims or escalate online harassment to real-world assault. The sites make it almost impossible to hide.

## Thwarting Stalkers

Jessica Tunon fled an emotionally abusive relationship in Florida in 2007. She moved to Virginia, but her former partner kept contacting her. When she changed her email address and phone number, he switched to messaging her on LinkedIn and Twitter.

Tunon filed a civil protection order against her harasser, but she knew she wasn't safe while he could still find her address online. Through her sister, who had once worked for a data broker, Tunon had learned just how much personal information was available to anyone through a quick web search.

Feeling scared and helpless, Tunon embarked on a campaign to scrub her contact information from the internet. For the next few years, she spent roughly 2 hours a week researching the subject, learning how to petition data brokers and other institutions to keep her information out of her former partner's hands.

Anyone can ask to have their information removed from one of these sites, but in most states, data brokers are not legally obligated to comply. Tunon sometimes had to speak with several employees at the same company before a people-search site agreed to delete her data. Other companies required her to send in a copy of the civil protection order before they'd help.

"Everything you do, you have to reshare your story," she says. Tunon

had hoped to distance herself from the traumatizing situation, but instead she was forced to relive it continually.

More than a year ago, I set out on a journey of my own. As I prepared to publish my second book, I tried to get my name off these people-search sites. It was almost impossible—it turns out that sites such as Whitepages are much more pernicious than the printed white pages of old.

My first book, “Unnatural Selection,” dealt with abortion and annoyed a small but vocal set of people, including a man who sent me a threatening Facebook message, promising to physically confront me at a reading. (My publisher scrambled to tighten security for the event, but the man didn’t show up.) At the time, I was living in the Netherlands, where there

are more regulations protecting data privacy, and my personal information wasn’t readily available.

This time around, I’d written a book on the U.S. government’s response to Chinese industrial espionage. Titled “The Scientist and the Spy,” it detailed allegations of racism within the FBI. I expected that it might also upset some people. And I was living in the U.S., where a trail of public records made me much easier to find.

Removing personal information from data brokers felt like a wise precaution for me, but for women such as Tunon, it’s absolutely essential. “We receive a steady stream of calls from people of all walks of life, all ages, and all states looking to get off of the data broker sites,” says Pam Dixon, executive director of the public interest research

group World Privacy Forum (WPF). “And there’s not an easy way to do it. They present profound safety issues.”

Victims of stalking or domestic violence can’t even find safety by fleeing to a relative’s house because when you look up a name, many people-search sites list not just that individual’s data but also information on their family members.

## Red Tape and Confusion

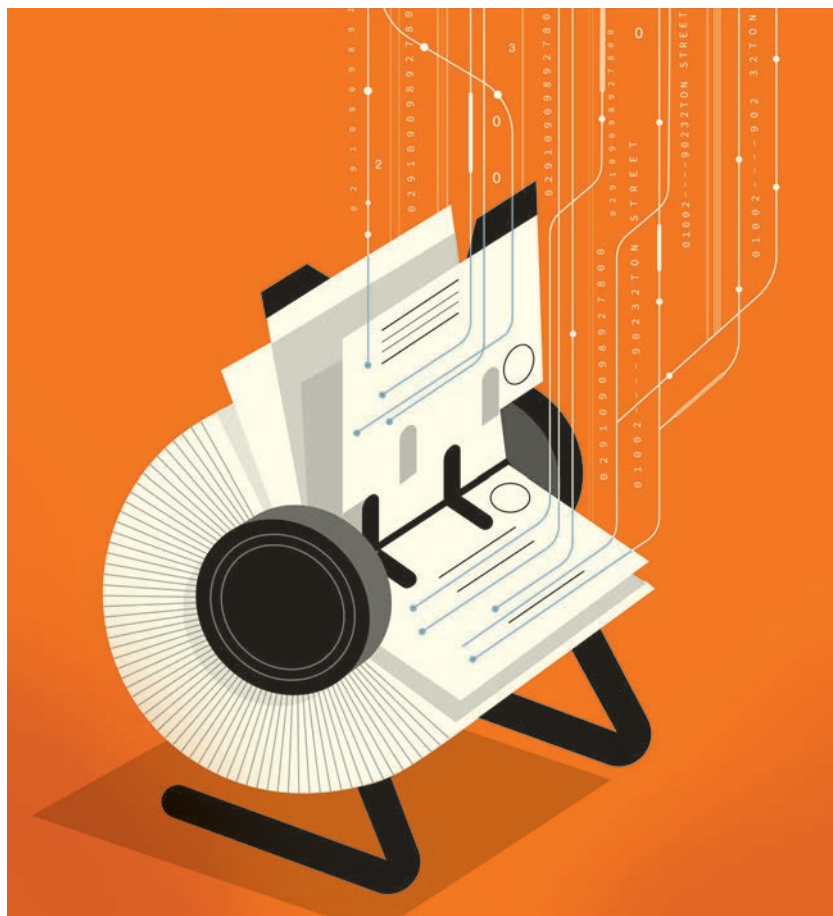
As Tunon found, concealing yourself from public view is complicated and time-consuming. You can’t do it by making a single phone call or filling out a single form, the way my mother did. And while many sites offer some way to remove yourself, each has a uniquely labyrinthine process that’s often difficult to learn about, much less navigate. It is far easier to buy the criminal records of all your neighbors than it is to scrub your personal details from these sites.

The WPF and other organizations have published information to help people get started deleting their data. I used the Big Ass Data Broker Opt-Out List, compiled by journalist Yael Grauer. (Grauer also wrote “Scrubbing Your Info From People-Search Sites,” on page 29, and is a major contributor to the CR Security Planner, described on page 30.)

Still, the process was tedious and confusing. I filled out online forms and sent off a slew of emails, starting with the larger data collection companies.

I kept a log of my efforts as I worked. “Spokeo—submitted with email confirmation,” I wrote one day. Then, later: “Radaris—claimed profile—deleted relevant records and made private.”

Some sites asked me to enter a current phone number or email address to remove my data, which felt like extortion. Others asked me to register and create a password but then gave me no option to delete all my data. A few even required me to pick up the phone, send snail mail, or fax in my





request. (Where do you even find a fax machine these days?)

The data brokers claim they need all kinds of small personal details to confirm an individual's identity before removing their data. "For the suppression to be accurate, it is requested that the individual provide all variations of their full name," Matt Ramsey, a spokesperson for Acxiom, one of the biggest data brokers, wrote in an email. "That might include nicknames, former names, married name, common spellings, or misspellings." But that can make it seem like you're just helping the data brokers add to their dossiers.

No two of the convoluted procedures seem to be alike. People who track the problem estimate that it can take from six business days to two weeks of full-time work to delete your information from data brokers' sites.

I made opting out a hobby, picking it up whenever my work was slow, and the process ended up spanning months. Grauer told me that opting out is so arduous, in the days before the coronavirus she considered hosting opt-out parties, where attendees would remove themselves from people-search sites while socializing.

Because people-search sites often get acquired by other companies, I had trouble keeping track of which was which. The opt-out processes frequently changed, too.

Worse yet, the companies were continually trawling driver's license registration records, voter registration databases, and address information from the U.S. Postal Service, creating new listings to replace the ones I had removed. It all struck me as deeply unfair. Data brokers were making money off of me, but I never volunteered to be turned into a product.

Even Pam Dixon at the WPF had trouble removing her personal information from these sites—and she works on privacy issues for a living.



**"IT ALL STRUCK ME  
AS DEEPLY UNFAIR.  
DATA BROKERS  
WERE MAKING  
MONEY OFF OF  
ME, BUT I NEVER  
VOLUNTEERED  
TO BE TURNED  
INTO A PRODUCT."**

Ultimately, I caved and joined a service called DeleteMe, which charges a sizable fee to suppress information that should be protected to begin with.

That didn't fully resolve the problem—even dedicated services miss some people-search sites. And paying isn't an option for everyone, especially at a moment when many Americans are experiencing financial hardships. "Privacy cannot be just for rich people and the privileged," Dixon says. "We need to offer free opt-outs that are easy, effective, and that last."

### **A Continuing Challenge**

Jessica Tunon now lives in Washington, D.C., where she is vigilant about trying to minimize the personal information she shares with any agency that feeds public records.

It has been an ongoing struggle. When Tunon started a business out of her home—the networking and wellness company Netwalking—the district's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs required a physical

address. She registered with one but then fought to have it replaced with a P.O. box; the effort took five years.

Out of caution, Tunon refrained from doing any marketing in the meantime. "The hardest thing was not being able to work on my company because my address was online," she says.

Tunon subsequently helped push for an address confidentiality program in Washington, D.C., which began in 2018. The program allows survivors of domestic abuse, stalking, sexual assault, and human trafficking to receive mail at a dummy address.

Only a handful of states have laws on the books that regulate people-search sites. Vermont has required data brokers to register with the secretary of state since Jan. 1, 2019, a measure that takes the first step of exposing which outfits are profiting from people's data.

Assistant attorney general Ryan Kriger, who helped shape the Vermont law, says industry lobbyists fought it tooth and nail. "The data broker industry had never been regulated before, and they wanted to keep it that way," Kriger says. "This is the only industry I can think of that flourishes by not having anyone know they exist."

Today, Tunon says, her information continues to show up on people-search sites, prompting her to regularly Google herself to find out what has appeared.

She has become an expert in all of this, but what happens to someone who speaks minimal English? Who doesn't have a steady internet connection? Who can't spend months removing their information because they face immediate threats?

Before I started paying to keep my data safe, I found my information reappearing online, too. Five months after opting out from one data broker, my profile popped back up. When I clicked on my name, the page showed a satellite photo of a house where I had once lived. I imagined people across America encountering similar images of their homes, as they sat at their computers, trying desperately to keep their information offline.



---

## PART

# 2

### SCRUBBING YOUR INFO FROM PEOPLE-SEARCH SITES

by Yael Grauer

**REMOVING YOUR DATA** from people-search sites isn't a one-time task: After you take the following steps, you'll have to check to make sure your info is gone, then repeat the process as it reappears, around twice a year. Because it's time-consuming, you may want start with a few of the best-known sites, such

as BeenVerified, PeopleFinders, Pipl, Spokeo, Whitepages, and ZoomInfo. (I maintain a list of more than 50 sites' opt-out links; search online for "Big Ass Data Broker Opt-Out List.")

First, check each site to learn whether it has your information listed. Then see what each data broker requires for you to opt out. Some make you send a letter

or fax, or call by phone. Others ask for personal information before they will scrub your data, so be cautious. For instance, if a data broker requests a copy of your driver's license, cross out your license number before you send it.

If time is a concern, you can pay a service to do the opting out for you. While none promise to remove your data from every people-search site out there, here's what leading companies currently offer:

**DeleteMe** removes your info from 41 sites every three months (\$129 per year, or \$229 for two people).

**PrivacyDuck** will do a monthly data removal for two people from 92 sites (\$499 per year) or 191 sites (\$999).

**OneRep** deletes info from 96 sites (\$100 per year per person, or \$180 for a family), with a pricier option for the most challenging sites.

# PART 3

## YOUR DIGITAL SECURITY ACTION PLAN

by the CR Editors

**STORIES AROUND ABOUT** online risks, from fake emails designed to steal your passwords to malware that can scramble everything on your computer.

But it's not hard to make your digital life much safer—even if you don't consider yourself tech-savvy.

What follows is a straightforward action plan that can help with a wide variety of digital security challenges, whether it's preserving family photos in the event of a stolen laptop or reducing the chance of a criminal logging in to your bank account.

The advice here is drawn from our free web-based guide, the CR Security Planner. We've selected 10 of the most critical steps, divided into four categories. Most take only a few minutes to accomplish, and doing even two or three can make a big difference.

The Security Planner was originally developed at the Citizen Lab, a research group at the University of Toronto, with CR's help. We updated and expanded the guide, and relaunched it last fall.

You can use the CR Security Planner to create a detailed and personalized action plan, based on the products you use and any special concerns you have. Find it at [SecurityPlanner.org](https://SecurityPlanner.org).



### Keep the Bad Guys Out of Your Accounts

#### TOP PRIORITY

#### GET A PASSWORD MANAGER

**THE LOWDOWN** Long, complicated passwords can help make sure no one else can log in to your financial, email, and other accounts. And you need a different one for every account. A password manager app makes this easier by creating and saving all those passwords, then entering them whenever you log in. You just need to remember one master password for the password manager itself.

**THE HOW-TO** Consumer Reports' top-rated options are 1Password, Keeper, and Bitwarden. Sign up (in most cases for a small monthly fee), download the app to your phone and computer, and start changing passwords, beginning with your most important accounts. This part could take a few hours, but you can do it over a few days if you like.

**PRO TIP** Your browser can save passwords for you, but your shiny new password manager will work across multiple browsers and devices, no matter which phone, tablet, or computer you use.

## USE MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION

**THE LOWDOWN** Now that you have strong passwords, it's belt-and-suspenders time. That means turning on multifactor authentication, or MFA—also called two-factor authentication, or 2FA. (The tech world is bubbling over with jargon.) With MFA, you need a second bit of proof that you're you, in addition to your password. That's good because if someone has stolen your password, they still won't be able to log in.

**THE HOW-TO** You can set up MFA for many accounts. Look under the same menu where you'd change your password, and follow the prompts to turn on MFA. You can opt to have a short, one-time code texted to you each time you want to log in to the account using a new device. Even better, many sites let you have the codes supplied by an app you download to your phone.

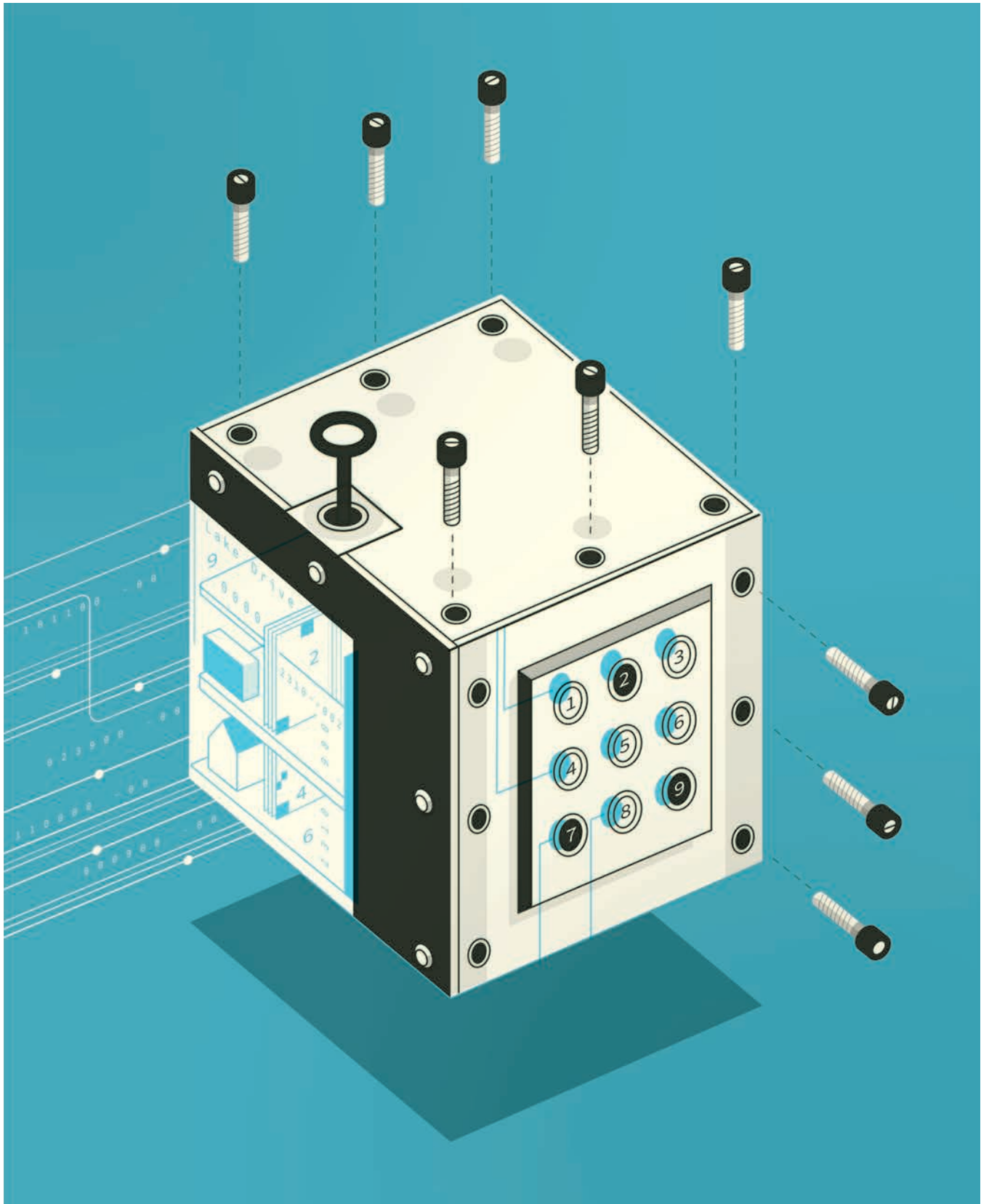
**PRO TIP** Consumer Reports doesn't evaluate authentication apps, but security experts often recommend Authy and Google Authenticator.

## SIDESTEP PHISHING SCAMS

**THE LOWDOWN** Received a house-on-fire email from the IRS, a bank, or Apple? Does it say you'd better log on right away to stop something terrible from happening? It could be a scam, so don't hit the reply button. Online criminals have become very skilled at phishing, making fake emails and websites look like they're those of a legitimate organization to trick people into giving up sensitive info or downloading dangerous software.

**THE HOW-TO** Hovering over a sender's email address or a link in an email can help you see whether the address or URL looks legitimate, but it's easy to miss the subtle differences between a legit link or web address and a fraudulent one. To be safe, open a new browser tab and go to the company's website yourself—don't





copy the link from the email! Then log in or call customer service to see what's going on with your account.

**PRO TIP** Never rely on a phone number in an email or a text message that purports to be from a business. Criminals can set up call centers, too.



## Guard Against Viruses and Other Malware

### TOP PRIORITY

## UPDATE YOUR SOFTWARE

**THE LOWDOWN** Bad actors steadily find new ways to attack computers, phones, and applications with malicious software that can spy on you, slow down your computer, corrupt or delete files, or even take control of a device. Keep your system software updated to get the latest protections.

**THE HOW-TO** Windows and Mac computers, Android and Apple smartphones, and tablets should all alert you when there's an operating system (or OS) update available. When you get the heads-up from your device, you simply need to click on a button to start the installation. It's wise to set up your various applications for automatic updates, too. Go into Settings on your devices to turn this feature on.

**PRO TIP** Hang on to any gadget long enough, and it will no longer be able to use the newest security updates. That's a good time to buy a new device.

## OPT FOR EXTRA PROTECTION

**THE LOWDOWN** Using an antivirus program or software can also help keep your devices clear of malware.

**THE HOW-TO** Windows 10 has built-in

antivirus protection, called Microsoft Defender Antivirus (or Windows Security in the latest version of the OS). To make sure it's on, go to Windows Security, under Update & Security in Settings.

Macs don't have an equivalent feature, but they come with firewalls you can turn on, which can block traffic from dangerous sites. (The Windows firewall is on by default.) For more protection, install antivirus software. Recommended free options include Avira Free Security Suite and Kaspersky Security Cloud Free, for Windows, and AVG Antivirus for Mac.

**PRO TIP** For most people, free antivirus packages offer plenty of protection. Paid security suites typically have features that might not appear in free options, including parental controls, antispam filters, and warnings that pop up if you click on a phishing link.



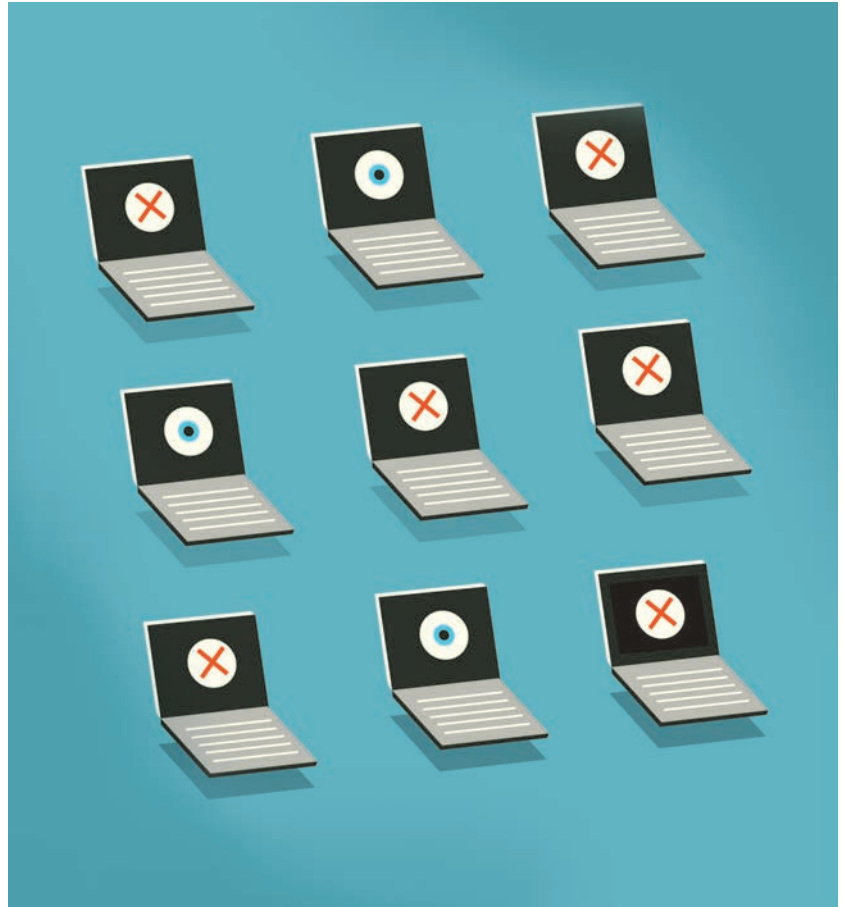
## Make Sure a Lost Phone or Laptop Isn't a Disaster

### TOP PRIORITY

## BACK UP YOUR FILES

**THE LOWDOWN** Many of us store cherished puppy photos, family pics from holidays past, and business pitches on our phones and laptops. But those files are at risk if our devices break or get lost, stolen, or damaged by malware. You can rest easier if you back up—make copies of—your files.

**THE HOW-TO** On your computer, search for File History on a Windows 10 computer or Time Machine on a Mac. Once there, you



can set up automatic backups, copying your files to an external drive in your home. You can also consider an online service, such as Apple iCloud or Google Drive, as an alternative or complement to local backups. With a smartphone, you can plug it into your computer and back the data up there, or have it back up to the cloud.

**PRO TIP** Think about your online storage needs and how to best meet them. Apple provides its customers with 5 gigabytes of free storage (as a very rough estimate, this might be enough to store a couple thousand photos shot with a modern smartphone), and Google provides 15GB. You can get 50GB from Apple for \$1 per month and 100GB from Google for \$2 per month. Backing up your data at home may be cheaper—external drives can cost less than \$100—but not quite as safe if you experience a flood or fire, or your backup drive fails.

## ENCRYPT YOUR DEVICES

**THE LOWDOWN** You can encrypt the data on your computer or phone to make everything from old tax documents to text messages inaccessible, which is smart in case your device is lost or stolen. Encryption scrambles the data so that it can't be accessed by anyone who doesn't have your password.

**THE HOW-TO** With a phone, you don't have to do much. Most Android phones and iPhones are encrypted any time the screen is locked with a passcode. So just make sure you choose a strong one—avoid obvious patterns such as 123456. Your computer takes a bit more work. In Windows 10, look under Settings for Update & Security, then Device encryption. Not there? On some Windows computers you'll need to search for Manage BitLocker instead—it allows you to choose specific files and folders to encrypt. If you have a Mac, the feature you want is called FileVault.

**PRO TIP** Your computer—but not your

phone—will be encrypted only when it's shut down, not simply asleep. So shut down your laptop when you're traveling with it.

## RESCUE LOST GADGETS

**THE LOWDOWN** Whether you left your laptop in the library or your phone in the back seat of an Uber, tech magic can help you find it—as long as you've set things up ahead of time.

**THE HOW-TO** You probably enabled Find My iPhone or Find My Device (for Android phones) when you first set up your smartphone. If you're unsure, double-check in Settings. Got a MacBook? The Find My Mac controls are in System Preferences. On a Windows laptop, look in Settings for Find My Device.

**PRO TIP** To track a missing gadget, you can sign in to your account from another device. Go to [icloud.com](https://icloud.com) for Apple products, [android.com/find](https://android.com/find) for Android devices, and [microsoft.com](https://microsoft.com) for Windows computers. For some devices, you can also lock or erase the contents.



## Hackproof Your Home Network

### TOP PRIORITY

## SAFEGUARD YOUR WIFI

**THE LOWDOWN** Your phone, computer, smart TV, smart speakers, video doorbells, and other devices connect to your home WiFi network, and from there to the internet, so it's vital to keep your WiFi as secure as possible.

**THE HOW-TO** First, make sure you have strong passwords for your WiFi network and for controlling your router's settings. (The router is the small device

that creates your WiFi network and connects it to the internet.) If you're using the default password that came with your router, change it pronto. Next, ensure that the software for your router is always up to date. If the router is from your internet service provider, the company probably does that for you. If you own your router, see whether you're getting automatic updates for it: Check the router's phone app or open a web browser and type in the device's IP address, a numeric designation you can find by searching the router model online. Once the manufacturer stops issuing updates, it's wise to get a new router.

**PRO TIP** In your router settings, be sure Universal Plug and Play and port forwarding are turned off. This makes it harder for malware and hackers to gain entry.

## SECURE SECURITY CAMERAS AND OTHER CONNECTED GIZMOS

**THE LOWDOWN** Anything that connects your home to the internet makes you at least a bit vulnerable to bad actors. For instance, some security cameras and baby monitors have been hacked and the videos viewed by strangers.

**THE HOW-TO** If you're shopping for an item such as a baby monitor, decide whether you really want one that connects to the internet. If you don't feel the need to check the monitor from your phone when you've left a babysitter in charge, consider a model that just works within your home. For items you do connect to WiFi, set up a strong password and use MFA if it's offered. Never use any default password that came with the device.

**PRO TIP** Even if you have an appliance that can connect to the internet, such as a garage door opener, you typically don't have to use that feature unless it feels like a real benefit to you.

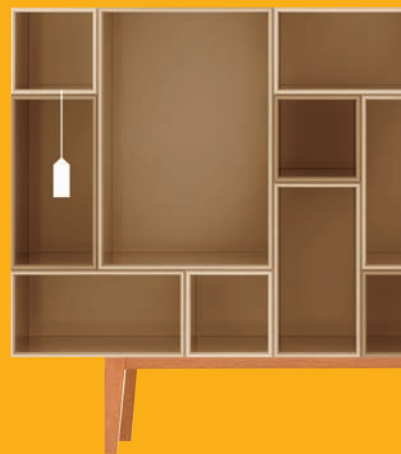




AND WORST



# THE BEST PLACES T



Add to cart





# 0 BUY FURNITURE



How to find things you'll love, whether you're shopping in a store or online. Plus: CR's exclusive ratings of furniture retailers.

**BY DANIEL BORTZ**



T

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** has forced legions of Americans to spend more time at home. Many of us are using these housebound days to make our surroundings more cozy and attractive. Online home goods sales are up for many retailers, with Wayfair, Williams-Sonoma (the parent company of Pottery Barn and West Elm), and Overstock among those reporting year-over-year increases in U.S. sales revenues for the third quarter.

Knowing where and how to find that perfect couch, ottoman, recliner, or bedroom set has rarely been simple. The range of retailers, prices, delivery and return policies, and quality both online and in-store can be overwhelming.

To help guide your furniture shopping choices, Consumer Reports surveyed more than 38,000 members about their furniture-buying experiences in the previous two years. (The survey was done in April 2020 and primarily reflects pre-pandemic shopping.) The resulting ratings of 48 walk-in stores and 17 online retailers starting on page 40 can point you toward furniture sellers that are right for you.

Whether you decide to head to a store or shop from your (current) couch, our essential intel will help you find the right piece at the best price and stay safe in the process.

## HEADING TO A STORE

Some people wouldn't think of buying a sofa or chair without seeing it in person first. "Furniture is something

that you need to see to believe," says Aun Hussain, a CR member in Sammamish, Wash., who recently bought a bedroom set and furniture for his home office at a Room & Board store. Our survey results suggest that walk-in furniture stores do a good job of satisfying consumers. Members we polled reported having very positive experiences in 88 percent of in-store purchases.

**Why to shop in person:** "If you're looking for something that needs to be comfortable, like a sofa, there's no way to tell online," says Rachel Alcorn, an interior designer in Wheaton, Ill. In a store you can stretch out into a seat, feel the different types of upholstery, and get a sense of the scale of a piece.

Personalized attention can be another bonus. "More likely than not, a furniture store will have a knowledgeable salesperson who can answer questions about things like fabric durability," says Megan Hersch, an interior designer in Los Angeles who shops in-store and online for her clients.

**Potential pitfalls:** Some shoppers in our survey said that they were frustrated by the limited selection offered in stores, and that customer service varied widely among retailers. Stickley, Room & Board, and Ethan Allen were among the walk-in stores that won high marks for customer service, while shoppers were less enthusiastic about the help offered at HomeGoods, Ikea, and Sam's Club.

Of course, going to a store means spending time in an enclosed space, which these days could increase your chances of being exposed to the coronavirus. To minimize that risk, there are important precautions you should take. "If possible, you should spend no more than 15 minutes in the store," says Ravina Kullar, PharmD, an infectious disease specialist and epidemiologist in Los Angeles. "And be sure to wash your

hands well or use hand sanitizer as soon as you can after leaving."

To keep your visit as short as possible, call ahead to ask if you can make an appointment with a salesperson so that you'll be helped immediately when you arrive. Kullar recommends asking if staff and customers are required to wear masks at all times (if not, don't go) and if the store limits capacity. And find out when the store is less likely to be busy.

**Success strategies:** "Browse online ahead of time and bring pictures of the room you're shopping for and the styles you like so the salesperson isn't throwing darts at the wall," says Dallas-based interior designer Juliana Oliveira. Kullar, who used this strategy herself when furniture shopping recently, says it's another way to minimize your time in a store.

**Ways to save:** When possible, comparison shop online in advance to find out what other stores are charging for the same or similar items. "Most independent retailers will price-match if asked and are always prepared to negotiate," says Jennifer Litwin, the author of "Best Furniture Buying Tips Ever!" (Random House, 2005). In fact, a third of our survey respondents told us they tried to haggle in-store. Of those, 72 percent reported success.

Alcorn recommends asking about upcoming sales or promotions and whether the store has any online deals it will extend to an in-store purchase. Requesting free delivery is another possible way to save, Oliveira says.

**Delivery details:** Nearly 90 percent of the in-store furniture purchases mentioned in our survey that were shipped or delivered were "white glove" deliveries, which means the furniture was brought to the home, assembled, and placed by the delivery team (as opposed to being left in a box at the curb). White-glove delivery usually costs extra, generally between \$60 and \$400 depending on factors

like the price of the furniture and your home's proximity to the store. Curbside delivery may be available free, but you'll need to get the furniture into your house or apartment yourself (and assemble it, if necessary).

You'll probably have to sign a form acknowledging receipt of the delivery. Inspect the furniture carefully while the delivery team waits, and don't accept it if there's a defect or other problem. The store may not accept a return if you do.

**Dealing with returns:** Before you buy, find out the return window, which can vary widely, and whether you'll have to pay return shipping fees. Also find out if the store will provide a full refund or store credit only. Even if you don't have to pay for return shipping, you may be charged a restocking fee, typically 10 to 20 percent of the sale price. Some stores don't accept returns at all (usually for custom-made items) and most won't refund a customer's original delivery fees.

## SHOPPING ONLINE

While you can't test out a sofa or chair before you buy it online, 85 percent of our survey respondents who shopped online reported they were very or completely satisfied, on a par with those who shopped in-store. "I bought my couch, chair, and ottoman online," says Nancy Stillwell, a CR member in Madison, Wis. "It made me nervous, but I couldn't find what I wanted at local stores so I shopped online, and my gamble paid off."

**Why to shop online:** The variety of styles, colors, and models available is vast. For example, a recent search on Amazon for a pink sofa—not likely the most popular color choice—returned more than 9,000 results. If you have something specific and unusual in mind, chances are you'll be able to find it online. You may also find the same item sold at several different online retailers,



## QUALITY IS IN THE DETAILS

Here are some things to look for when reading furniture descriptions and questions to ask when talking with a customer service rep or salesperson.

### Upholstered Furniture

SOFAS, ARMCHAIRS, ETC.

**CONSTRUCTION:** A kiln-dried hardwood frame with eight-way hand-tied springs is tops in quality. Less expensive webbing support can be comfortable but tends to stretch over time. Plywood platform support is the least expensive—and the least comfortable.

**CUSHIONS:** The best are filled entirely with down (real or synthetic) or, for more support, have a foam core wrapped with down or synthetic down. Less expensive seating will have all-foam cushions, which may look very square and blocky.

**FABRIC:** "If a fabric starts to pill or stains easily, you'll hate the

sofa or chair long before it wears out," says Juliana Oliveira, an interior designer in Dallas. The most durable fabrics are "commercial grade," "performance," or "indoor/outdoor," she adds. Blends made with polyester are usually more durable, easier to clean, and less expensive than all-cotton or all-linen upholstery.

**LEATHER:** Extremely soft top-grain leather can stain easily and may not be the best choice for dining chairs or in households with young children. For the look of leather without the high price and upkeep, manufactured versions like "bonded" leather or leather "gel" (essentially leather scraps held

together with glue or polyurethane) may be easier to maintain.

### Wood Furniture

TABLES, BOOKCASES, DESKS, ETC.

**CONSTRUCTION:** Many people think solid wood is best, but wood veneer can be more affordable and work well for bookshelves and other large, solid pieces.

**JOINTS:** Dovetail joints are strongest, but furniture with "butt" joints (which are glued) can stand up well and cost less.

**FINISH:** Surfaces should be smooth and finishes even. For dining-room tables and other heavily used pieces, a catalyzed conversion varnish will be more resistant to wear than a lacquer top coat.



# PULL UP A CHAIR: 6 POPULAR RETAILERS COMPARED

Here's a closer look at how prices, policies, and products vary among furniture sellers. Refer to our ratings charts starting on page 40 to see how these retailers and others did in our survey.

## AMAZON

RIVET FREDERICK CHAIR

**PRICE:** \$464.20



**WHAT YOU GET:** Velvet upholstery, foam seat; some assembly required.  
**DELIVERY:** Doorstep delivery is free with Amazon Prime. In-home delivery is available on some items for \$19.99.  
**RETURNS:** Return within 30 days for a refund in most cases; return shipping is free or Amazon will schedule a pickup.  
**WARRANTY:** Amazon brands carry a minimum one-year warranty. For other brands, the warranty varies from manufacturer to manufacturer.  
**GOOD TO KNOW:** Almost an unlimited selection.

## COSTCO

WALLIS CHAIR (PAIR)

**PRICE:** \$219.99  
(available online only at Costco.com)



**WHAT YOU GET:** Polyester upholstery fabric, foam seat; some assembly required.  
**DELIVERY:** Some items are available in-warehouse. More items are available at Costco.com; prices include delivery.  
**RETURNS:** They're accepted anytime for a full refund. Some large items ordered online may be picked up at the customer's home for no additional charge.  
**WARRANTY:** Costco offers a risk-free 100% satisfaction guarantee.  
**GOOD TO KNOW:** Can shop in-store or online, but must be a member to make a purchase (\$60 per year).

**RH** (Restoration Hardware)  
REGINALD CHAIR

**PRICE:** \$1,571-\$2,996  
(member's price)



**WHAT YOU GET:** Italian textured weave fabric, feather down, foam seat; fully assembled.  
**DELIVERY:** White-glove delivery in the contiguous U.S. for \$199-\$599 depending on distance from the nearest RH Gallery.  
**RETURNS:** Contact RH within 30 days of the delivery date. Round-trip shipping is refunded if the item is defective or damaged. RH will pick up large pieces.  
**WARRANTY:** No official policy, but RH says it stands behind its products.  
**GOOD TO KNOW:** Shop online or in-store. Design help and a 25% discount are perks of a \$100 annual membership.

## ROOM & BOARD

QUINN CHAIR

**PRICE:** \$799 and up  
(chair only)



**WHAT YOU GET:** Performance fabric, fiber-wrapped foam cushions; fully assembled.  
**DELIVERY:** White-glove delivery in the contiguous U.S. for \$79.  
**RETURNS:** A full refund for "timely" returns; damaged or worn items may be refused or result in an adjustment. Return shipping is refunded; original delivery fees are not. Pickup may be arranged for large items.  
**WARRANTY:** No official policy. Room & Board says it will work with customers to resolve any problems.  
**GOOD TO KNOW:** Buy in-store or online. There are extensive customer service options, including free design services.

## SAM'S CLUB

HARLOW CHAIR AND OTTOMAN SET

**PRICE:** \$399



**WHAT YOU GET:** Chair and ottoman, stain-resistant fabric; fully assembled.  
**DELIVERY:** Free shipping on many items. White-glove delivery is limited and the cost varies by item.  
**RETURNS:** They're accepted anytime. No charge for return shipping. Items purchased in a store must be returned there. Sam's Club may arrange a pickup for the return of large items.  
**WARRANTY:** Varies by item; Sam's Club has a 100% satisfaction guarantee.  
**GOOD TO KNOW:** Shop in-store or online; membership is required (\$45 per year).

## STICKLEY

WALNUT GROVE CHAIR

**PRICE:** \$2,685  
(upholstered in fabric)



**WHAT YOU GET:** Solid American black walnut covered in fabric or leather.  
**DELIVERY:** Each Stickley retailer has an individual policy.  
**RETURNS:** Warranty-related returns only.  
**WARRANTY:** A limited warranty guarantees against structural defects during the lifetime of the original owner.  
**GOOD TO KNOW:** In-store shopping only. Many Stickley retailers offer complimentary interior design services.

which could allow you to save money by price shopping.

**Potential pitfalls:** It's difficult to determine quality or durability from online images and descriptions.

"Be careful if you're unsure of a brand's quality," says Sara Chwatt, an interior designer in Short Hills, N.J. She advises looking closely at an item's measurements and description, reading reviews from verified buyers, and investing as much as your budget allows. "You often get what you pay for," she says.

But even buying from a retailer you know and paying top dollar won't guarantee you'll be happy with the purchase if you don't do your research. "I ordered a pair of \$1,300 sofas online from West Elm and when they came, the seats weren't as deep as they looked in the picture," says Litwin, the furniture-shopping expert. (She hadn't checked the dimensions before ordering.) "I was able to return them, but West Elm didn't refund my original shipping and charged me a 10 percent restocking fee."

Avoid the same mistake by measuring your existing furniture to note the dimensions that are comfortable for your body, and double-check the dimensions of anything you purchase online.

**Success strategies:** Use the tools online retailers offer, such as detailed measurement and specification information, and the customer service and design teams who can answer questions via chat, email, or phone. Some retailers, including Crate & Barrel and Pottery Barn, employ designers who will meet with you online to create a floor plan at no charge.

**Ways to save:** Most of the strategies recommended when shopping in a walk-in store hold true online. Comparison shop, and ask customer service about upcoming sales, special discount codes, and free shipping offers. You can often save on your first order by signing up for the company's promotional emails. You can also use

## BEFORE YOU BUY

### MAKE SURE IT FITS

Measure all the doorways and hallways the furniture will have to pass through to be delivered to your home. The websites of many furniture retailers provide detailed instructions about measuring.

### REQUEST SAMPLES

Many stores and online retailers will send you swatches of fabric and sometimes furniture finishes, often for free.

### STUDY THE ONLINE

**IMAGES** Look at all of the images a retailer posts of the furniture you're considering buying, then check its social media accounts to see if there are pictures of the furniture in customers' homes. Zoom in on details like upholstery seams to make sure they're straight and neatly finished.

**READ THE REVIEWS** Pay attention to common complaints, such as a color being brighter or darker in real life than it looks online or a piece being hard to assemble.

### CHECK THE WARRANTY

A one-year warranty is standard but doesn't cover wear and tear, which can be a gray area. Ratings and reviews from the Better Business Bureau may indicate a retailer's willingness to work out problems.

email or the site's chat feature to ask for a discount. Eighty percent of CR's survey respondents who did this were offered a lower price.

**Delivery details:** Furniture retailers with in-store and online shopping usually deliver via white-glove service for both—and for about the same fee—depending on the cost of the order and your location. Amazon, Overstock, Wayfair, and other online retailers often offer standard shipping or curbside delivery, free.

CR members in our survey who bought furniture online weren't as happy with the quality of the delivery service as in-store buyers were. Just 17 percent of the online purchases reported by our members came via white-glove delivery vs. a majority of in-store purchases, so it may be worth paying extra for the convenience of white-glove delivery if it's offered. It's especially convenient for large items and those that require assembly. Some retailers offer an assembly service—sometimes by an outside company—for an additional fee that may vary by item. Ikea, for example, bases assembly fees (starting at \$18) on the cost of the item, and may charge an additional \$35 for someone to come to your home.

**Dealing with returns:** Most online retailers have generous return windows during which you can return an item—undamaged and with a receipt—for a full refund. But returning an item can be a real chore. You may have to repack it and pay return shipping charges, which can be substantial. If the item arrived damaged or missing parts, you typically don't have to pay to return it, and the company may even send its delivery team to your home to remedy the problem.

Always open the box and inspect the goods before you sign for delivery. And keep all of the packaging until you're sure you're satisfied. Some online stores require customers to return items unassembled and in the original packaging.

**Ratings** ➤ **Talking Shop** Choosing a store with the best combination of quality, selection, service, and price can take the worry out of furniture shopping.

Furniture Store	Reader Survey Results											
	Overall satisfaction score	Quality	Customer service	On-time delivery	Quality of delivery	Policies	Communication	Website usability	Price paid	Selection	Returns	In-store atmosphere
<b>WALK-IN</b>												
Stickley	93	⬆️	⬆️	—	—	—	—	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Room & Board	93	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Costco	90	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬆️	⬇️	—	⬇️
Independent retailer	90	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Jordan's Furniture	89	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Scandinavian Designs Furniture	89	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Nebraska Furniture Mart	89	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Baer's Furniture	88	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Ethan Allen	88	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
RC Willey Home Furnishings	88	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Crate & Barrel	88	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬆️
Cost Plus World Market	88	⬇️	⬇️	—	—	⬇️	—	NA	⬆️	⬇️	—	⬆️
Macy's	87	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬆️
Bassett Furniture	87	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
American Furniture Warehouse	87	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Living Spaces	86	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Staples	86	⬇️	⬇️	—	—	—	—	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬇️
HomeGoods	86	⬇️	⬇️	—	—	⬇️	—	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬇️
Havertys	86	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️
RH (Restoration Hardware)	86	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Ikea	86	⬇️	⬇️	⬇️	⬇️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	⬆️
Steinhafels	86	⬆️	⬆️	—	—	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Furniture Row	86	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Slumberland Furniture	85	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬆️
Target	85	⬇️	—	—	—	⬇️	—	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬇️
Pottery Barn	85	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬆️
Office Depot	84	⬇️	⬇️	—	—	⬇️	—	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬇️
La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries	84	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️
Raymour & Flanigan	84	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬆️
Lowe's	84	⬇️	⬇️	—	—	⬆️	—	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬇️
Kane's Furniture	84	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Big Lots	84	⬇️	⬇️	—	—	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬆️	⬇️	—	⬇️
Star Furniture	84	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬆️	—	⬆️
Arhaus	84	⬆️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	NA	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬆️

Furniture Store	Reader Survey Results											
	Overall satisfaction score	Quality	Customer service	On-time delivery	Quality of delivery	Policies	Communication	Website usability	Price paid	Selection	Returns	In-store atmosphere

#### WALK-IN *Continued*

Value City Furniture	83	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
Badcock Home Furniture	83	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
Levin Furniture	83	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
Bob's Discount Furniture	83	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
Home Depot	83	↓	—	—	—	↓	—	NA	↓	↓	—	↓
Sam's Club	82	↓	↓	—	—	↓	—	NA	↑	↓	—	↓
West Elm	82	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
Jerome's Furniture	81	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
City Furniture	81	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	—	↑
Rooms to Go	81	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	↓	↑
Mathis Brothers	81	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	NA	↓	↑	—	↑
Walmart	80	↓	—	—	—	↓	—	NA	↓	↓	—	↓
Ashley Furniture HomeStore	79	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	NA	↓	↓	↓	↑

#### ONLINE

Room & Board	91	↑	—	↑	↑	—	↑	↑	↓	↑	—	NA
Costco	89	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	—	NA
RH (Restoration Hardware)	87	↑	—	↓	↑	—	↑	↑	↓	↑	—	NA
Amazon.com	86	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	NA
Independent retailer	85	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	—	NA
Sam's Club	85	↓	—	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	—	NA
Pottery Barn	84	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	—	NA
Macy's	84	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	—	NA
Wayfair	84	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	NA
Target	83	↓	—	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	—	NA
Home Depot	83	↓	—	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	—	NA
Crate & Barrel	83	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	—	NA
Overstock.com	83	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	—	NA
Ikea	82	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	—	NA
West Elm	82	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	—	NA
Walmart	81	↓	—	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	—	NA
Ashley Furniture HomeStore	78	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	—	NA

**HOW WE SURVEY:** Scores are based on 28,665 ratings from Consumer Reports members on their experience purchasing furniture at a walk-in store and 9,276 ratings of purchases online.

For the overall satisfaction score, 100 means all respondents were completely satisfied; 80, very satisfied; and 60, somewhat satisfied, on average.

For walk-in stores, differences of fewer than 6 points aren't meaningful; for online stores, it's 5 points. Ratings for other attributes reflect average scores on a scale from very poor to excellent.

Results might not be representative of the U.S. population. "—" means the sample size was insufficient to provide a rating.



# EAT HEALTHIER— EVEN DURING A PANDEMIC



---

COVID-19 has changed the way many of us eat. Here's how to incorporate nutritious and delicious food into your new normal.

BY RACHEL RABKIN PEACHMAN ILLUSTRATIONS BY CEYLAN SAHIN EKER



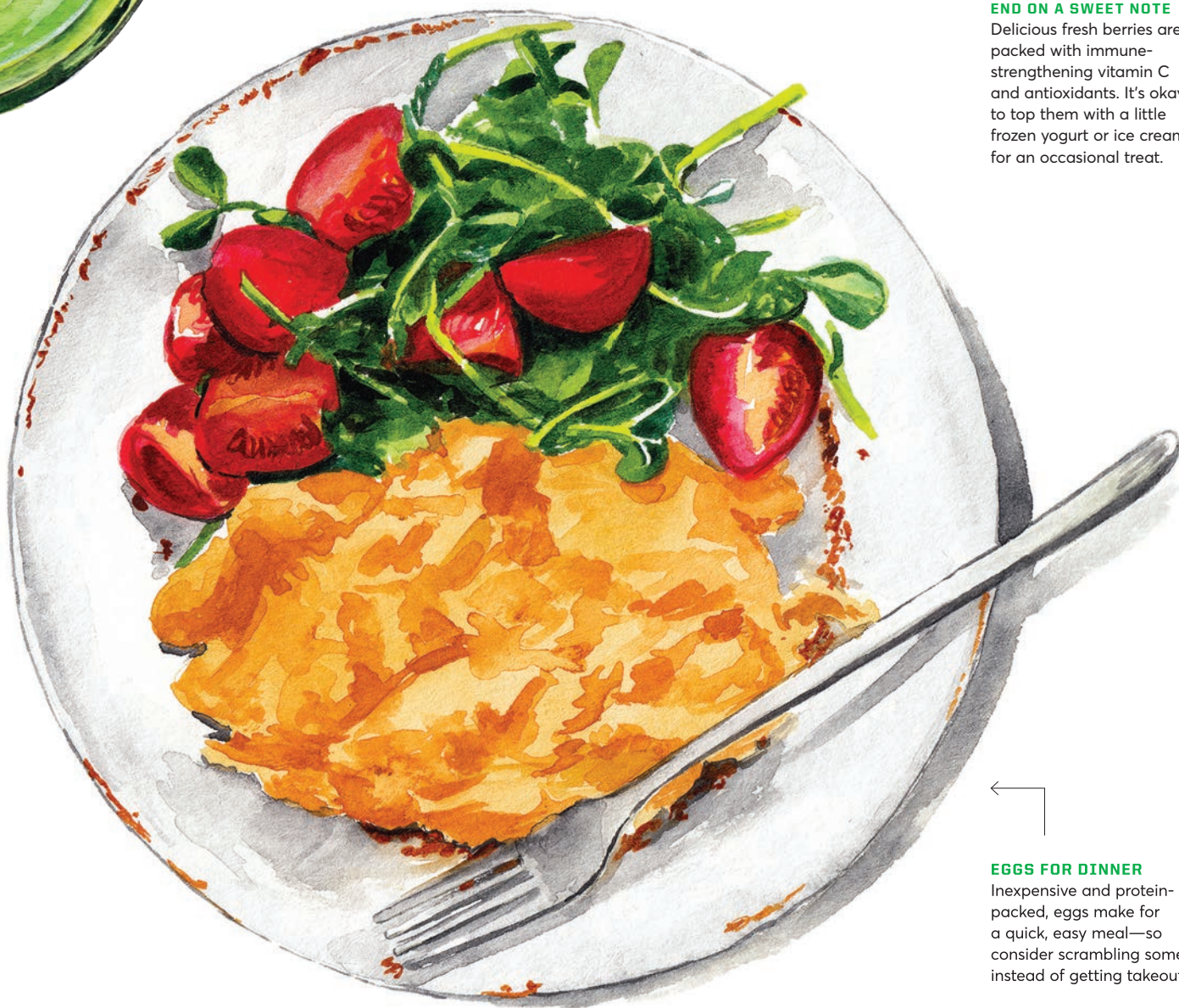
### SUPER SMOOTHIE

Vitamin-rich leafy greens boost nutrition. Try kale with pineapple or spinach with blueberries.



### END ON A SWEET NOTE

Delicious fresh berries are packed with immune-strengthening vitamin C and antioxidants. It's okay to top them with a little frozen yogurt or ice cream for an occasional treat.



### EGGS FOR DINNER

Inexpensive and protein-packed, eggs make for a quick, easy meal—so consider scrambling some instead of getting takeout.



---

There are few aspects of our lives that COVID-19 hasn't affected. But one of the most fundamental shifts is how it has prompted many of us to practically reinvent what, where, and how we eat.

"There's no doubt Americans' relationship with food has been transformed," says Jane Manweiler, who led two recent nationally representative surveys at Consumer Reports that addressed eating habits and food shopping patterns, each involving more than 2,000 American adults.

At the pandemic's start, many of us stumbled into a new way of life that necessitated eating every meal at home with just those who lived there. About 80 percent of Americans say they've made at least one change in the food they eat or the way they source or prepare it, CR's surveys found. Initially, we all viewed those changes as stopgaps. But as the weeks turned into months, we realized we'd developed new patterns that could have lasting consequences.

Like everything about this pandemic, different groups have been affected in various, often unequal ways. Jagdish Khubchandani, PhD, a professor at New Mexico State University and lead author of a study on U.S. eating practices during the pandemic, says "some people are doing extremely well, and others are declining in their health."

For every person who is cooking more or growing their own food, there's another who is relying on takeout. While many are enjoying more family meals, others are coping with dining solo. According to CR's surveys, people are snacking, stress eating, and eating comfort foods more often. Thirty-two percent of people say they've gained weight, and 15 percent say they've lost some.

More Americans are also touched by food insecurity: The percentage of people using a food pantry or food bank rose from 12 percent before the pandemic to 19 percent, CR's survey found. And the crisis has widened the socioeconomic divide, Khubchandani says. Many people who can work from home "don't spend much time on a commute now, they maintained their jobs, and have more control over their life, so their diet habits have actually improved," he says. But people who lost their jobs may not "have access to good food now."

Yet eating well is especially vital at this time, given that obesity, heart disease, and diabetes all increase the risk of COVID-19 complications.

So almost a year into the pandemic, this is a good time to evaluate your diet and see which habits you want to keep and which could be rethought. We talked with people who have experienced food shifts, and asked nutritionists how to make these new eating patterns as healthy and enjoyable as possible.



**P**RE-PANDEMIC, Emoré Campbell, a wedding planner in Charlotte, N.C., was accustomed to dinners out, happy hour drinks, and frequent travel. But once the single 29-year-old realized she'd be steering clear of restaurants, bars, and airplanes for a while, she decided to overhaul her approach to food shopping and cooking.

"I'm a down-South girl, so I know how to fry some chicken and I can make a mean potato salad," Campbell says. "But now I'm expanding, taking it up a notch, trying a range of recipes—things that my mother never made, like beef bourguignon and soy mushroom burgers."

At the same time, she wanted to be able to prepare foods that would support her immune system and keep her fit—and do so without breaking the bank.

"I've always liked fresh fruit and vegetables, but now I want to get as many nutrients as I can," she says. So she invested in a juicer, which she packs with a variety of fruits and vegetables, and an air fryer so that she can cook chicken wings, fish, and meatballs with less fat.

Campbell says she's looking forward to showing off her new cooking skills after the pandemic. "I want to be known for making great meals for my family and friends."

# 'I'm trying a range of recipes.'

EMORÉ CAMPBELL, NORTH CAROLINA

## CR'S ADVICE

### HOW TO FIND YOUR INNER CHEF

"There are many benefits to cooking at home," says Emma Laing, PhD, director of dietetics at the University of Georgia. It can give you "more control over the ingredients," and "it can be soothing to engage all of your senses in a purposeful activity."

To make the most of home cooking, try these tips:

**BUY EXTRA AND FREEZE.** Many foods can be frozen, so put your freezer to work. For example, freeze berries and grapes on a cookie sheet lined with wax paper or parchment, then place in an airtight container in the freezer. Or blanch veggies in boiling water, then run under cold water before

freezing in an airtight container.

**PLAN YOUR MEALS.** Campbell says she's taken to perusing recipes online and planning meals for the week so that she can take fewer supermarket trips while making her food budget go further.

**BUY IN BULK.** To keep prices down, Campbell says she buys some groceries with a friend. "It's much more affordable

to buy a 'family size' package of meat or chicken or a big bag of broccoli and split it," she says.

**COOK ONCE, EAT TWICE.** Make double or triple portions so that you have several servings of a healthy meal. Dishes like vegetable soup, chili, pizza, and lasagna freeze well. Divide into one or two servings so that you can pull out only what you need.

## NEW DISCOVERIES

One of Campbell's air fryer creations: sticky ginger meatballs with broccolini and sweet potatoes.







## 'We noticed we were gaining weight.'

SHANIQUA WILLIAMS AND HER FAMILY,  
PENNSYLVANIA

**S**HANIQUA WILLIAMS didn't have much time to stock up on groceries for her family of five when stay-at-home orders went into effect in her hometown, Harrisburg, Pa. "I did my regular shopping, but after a week or so, we needed more food, and we were hesitant to go to the store."

Plus, convenience was key. The 32-year-old, who runs her own marketing agency, and her husband were working from home while remote schooling their daughters, ages 11, 8, and 5. So they were short on time and motivation to cook well-rounded meals.

The family got into the habit of ordering in, often choosing pizza, fried chicken, "anything that was satisfying," Williams says. For snacks, she opted for easy options so that she wouldn't have to stop work every time the kids got hungry. "It was what the kids would grab and eat on their own," she says. Chips, ice cream, cheese sticks, and doughnuts became the norm.

Without the constant pressure to cook, the family did have "time to hang out and bond," Williams says. But after several months, Williams saw a downside, too: "In August we noticed that we were gaining weight, and we were out of shape," she says. "I felt

unhealthy, and the kids were literally snacking all day long."

So Williams instituted family exercise time, including walks, bike rides, and backyard trampoline sessions.

She also decided to gradually change the family's eating habits. "We tried to make it more of a lifestyle change vs. a diet because I never can stick to a diet," Williams says.

"Instead of all those chips, I went to farmers markets and bought a lot of produce. I might buy a bag of chips now, but when it's gone, it's gone."

Williams made other substitutions that didn't require a lot of time and effort. She ordered in less and cooked more grilled chicken and fish. She traded regular pastas for noodles made of cauliflower or zucchini, and swapped ice cream for yogurt smoothies topped with fruit and granola. Instead of juice boxes, she invested in a water cooler.

The efforts paid off. She and her husband are getting back in shape, and their daughters adapted surprisingly easily to eating more whole foods. (It helps that her girls don't realize they're eating veggie noodles, not traditional pasta.)

They've even started to enjoy cooking themselves. "Now if the kids want pizza, we'll make it together in a healthier way," Williams says.

### CR'S ADVICE

## HOW TO CURB MINDLESS EATING

In CR's survey, 22 percent of people said they were eating healthier now than they were a year ago. But almost a third reported weight gain, and in that group, 37 percent said their eating habits had worsened.

As the Williamses experienced, spending so much time at home—with the fridge only steps away—can blur the boundaries around food, says Lisa Young, PhD, a nutrition and food studies expert at New York University. "When people have less structure in their day and more access to the kitchen, it leads to more snacking and nibbling," she says. Though it

can be hard to change and adopt new habits, a little planning can help.

**CREATE A SCHEDULE.** That includes general times for three meals and one or two snacks. To keep everyone in check, post a schedule and maybe even set a timer for the kids. Knowing when you'll be eating again can fend off the urge to snack on empty calories.

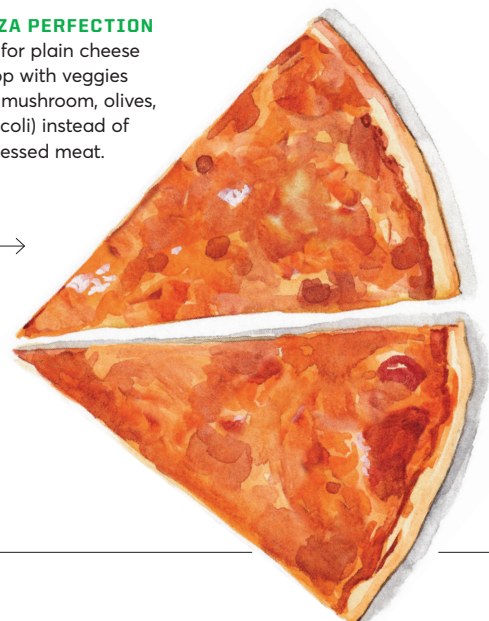
**MAKE IT EASIER TO GRAB A HEALTHY SNACK.** Put together individual snack packs in advance, preferably with some protein, carbs, and fat, which can help keep you full.

**DON'T USE TAKEOUT AS AN EXCUSE TO EAT UNHEALTHY FOOD.** Order dishes with lean protein, plenty of vegetables, and whole grains. If you just can't bypass more indulgent fare, get one decadent dish to share, and round out the meal with healthier picks. Go for the small pizza, for example, but also order a salad, grilled fish, and sautéed vegetables. Serve everyone a portion of each dish.

**PLAN YOUR TREATS.** "I call it delay, don't deprive," Young says. Know that you're going to get your coveted food at an appointed time in the day. "Depriving yourself completely backfires," she says, because it often leads to overindulgence at the wrong times.

### PIZZA PERFECTION

Opt for plain cheese or top with veggies (like mushroom, olives, broccoli) instead of processed meat.



# HOW MEAL DELIVERY KITS MAKE PANDEMIC COOKING EASIER

The pandemic has triggered a resurgence of interest in meal kits—boxes of ingredients and recipes delivered to your door. And that may be a healthy trend. CR had 30 meal-kit users with varying levels of cooking experience—both new users and those who subscribed for at least six months—score five popular kits in five areas. (See our user-experience scores, below.) Separately, CR’s nutrition experts reviewed a week’s worth of meals in

July 2020. They looked for recipes with whole grains, legumes, plenty of vegetables, at least 8 grams of fiber, and less than 8 grams of saturated fat and 500 mg of sodium. Overall, our volunteers were pleased with the services they used, but there were some differences. And though the kits mostly feature unprocessed ingredients, our experts say nutritional quality varies. For more details, go to [CR.org/mealkits0221](https://www.consumerreports.org/mealkits0221). —Catherine Roberts



## HOME CHEF

PRICE PER WEEK: \$107.88 (plus \$7.99 shipping)



**WHAT WE FOUND:** Participants were satisfied with the portion sizes. A few said they liked having the option to swap out protein sources. Said one volunteer: “For the most part, they turn out to be really good-tasting, professional meals and something that you feel like you can create on your own.” Another said, “Nobody had any complaints in the family, not even our picky eaters.” There were occasional problems with order delays or the quality of the ingredients.

**NUTRITION EVALUATION:** Recipe cards don’t list saturated fat or fiber. Unlike the other kits we looked at, sodium counts include salt added to the dish during cooking; the dishes ranged from 335 mg to 1,741 mg per serving. None of the meals had legumes or whole grains. Our experts estimated that about two-thirds had 1 cup or more vegetables per serving.



## SUN BASKET

PRICE PER WEEK: \$143.88 (plus \$7.99 shipping)



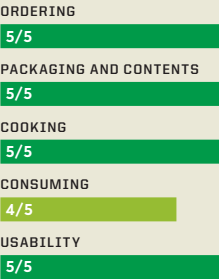
**WHAT WE FOUND:** Users were highly satisfied with the selection, and some said the service offered interesting ingredients. “They oftentimes have a really good variety of brand new meals,” one user said. Another commented: “Good-sized portions for people who are being healthful about their eating.” Some users liked being able to swap out protein sources. A few reported missing items, moldy produce, or delayed deliveries, or said that the boxes they received appeared to have been opened and resealed. Many said it was a bit pricey (it is the most expensive of the services in our tests). Sun Basket’s recipe cards don’t provide photos.

**NUTRITION EVALUATION:** Sun Basket had the most recipes that met our experts’ healthy meal parameters. All produce was organic.



## HELLOFRESH

PRICE PER WEEK: \$107.88 (plus \$7.99 shipping)



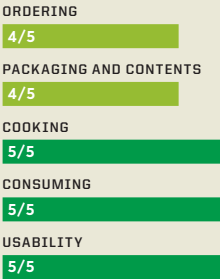
**WHAT WE FOUND:** Several volunteers said that they would like larger portions, though a few thought there was enough for leftovers. One participant, who said she wasn’t normally a good cook, noted that she had a good experience and learned new cooking skills. There were a few instances of missing or damaged ingredients, or delayed deliveries.

**NUTRITION EVALUATION:** Several recipes had well above 8 grams of saturated fat per serving. About a third of them had more than 1,000 mg of sodium, and just a few contained legumes or whole grains. Our experts estimated that about two-thirds of the meals provided 1 cup or more vegetables per serving.



## BLUE APRON

PRICE PER WEEK: \$95.88 (free shipping)



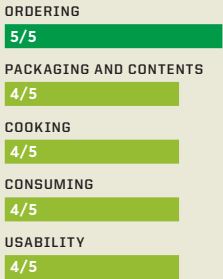
**WHAT WE FOUND:** At times, deliveries were delayed or ingredients were missing or damaged. Some users commented that cook times were longer than recipe cards stated and that recipes were a little difficult to follow. Several users thought that there was some repetition in the offerings: “It would be nice to have a little extra variety,” one said.

**NUTRITION EVALUATION:** Most recipes met our saturated fat and fiber criteria, but about half of the dishes we looked at had 1,000 mg of sodium or more per serving. No recipes contained whole grains or legumes, but all had 1 cup or more of vegetables per serving.

## DINNERLY

### DINNERLY

PRICE PER WEEK: \$68.87 (plus \$8.99 shipping)



**WHAT WE FOUND:** Some people reported missing or ruined ingredients, or delayed deliveries. Several commented that all the ingredients came in one box rather than being individually packed by meal. Many volunteers said they appreciated this service’s lower price (it was the least expensive of the ones we looked at). A few said they liked being able to order up to six meals per week. (Home Chef also offers this service.) Recipes must be viewed online, and there are no photos. Some volunteers thought the meals were a bit bland. “I do, a lot of times, add extra seasonings and stuff that I have in the house,” said one.

**NUTRITION EVALUATION:** Recipe cards don’t list saturated fat, fiber, or sodium. Most recipes didn’t contain legumes or whole grains, and just half of the recipes had 1 cup of vegetables per serving. There wasn’t much vegetable variety.

Note: Scores are based on user experience. Cost is based on three meals per week for four people.





# HEALTHY SNACKS TO KEEP ON HAND

Snacking, comfort food, desserts—eating more of all of these during the pandemic has upended many healthy diets. But it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, between-meal eating can actually be good for you, if you do it right. "Eating better overall can mean the difference between feeling energetic or fatigued and between

strengthening or weakening your immune system," says Amy Keating, a registered dietitian at Consumer Reports. Fruits and vegetables are always a great option, but when you want something a little more indulgent, rather than downing potato chips, consider these nutritious snack ideas from CR's food and diet experts.



## POPCORN

It's better to pop your own, but bagged options can be good if you choose one with no more than 50 mg of sodium and 3 grams of fat per cup, like **Angie's Boomchickapop Sea Salt**. CR's taste testers say it has a nice toasted-corn flavor and crispy-crunchy texture.



## NUTS

Eating a handful of nuts a day can help protect against heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Any (unsalted) nut will do. **Woodstock Roasted & Unsalted Almonds** are slightly fruity and have a natural sweetness.



## NUT BUTTER

A slice of whole-grain toast or an apple with nut butter is a satisfying snack. Choose one that has no added sodium or sugars, like **Kirkland Signature (Costco) Creamy Almond Butter**.



## ENERGY BARS

Look for nuts and dried fruit as the main sources of protein and fiber, not protein from soy isolates, rice, or peas, or fiber from chicory root or corn. **Larabar Blueberry Muffin** fits the bill and is tasty, too.



## YOGURT

Probiotics, protein, calcium, potassium, and magnesium make yogurt one of the best snacks. In CR's yogurt tests, **Icelandic Provisions 1.5% Milk Fat Traditional Skyr Vanilla Yogurt** came out on top of the ratings and is among the products lowest in added sugars.



## DARK CHOCOLATE

A little dark chocolate is a nice treat, and a higher cacao content means less sugars and more antioxidants. Look for at least 70 percent cacao, like **Trader Joe's 72% Cacao**, top-rated in CR's tests for its complex flavor. Half a bar has just 6 grams of added sugars.



## GRANOLA

Look for simple flavors and healthful whole ingredients, such as nuts, dried fruit, and oats, like you'll find in **Bear Naked Fruit & Nut Granola**.



## LEGUME SNACKS

Legume chips and puffs are higher in protein and fiber than potato or corn chips. That may make them more satisfying, so you'll eat fewer of them. One ounce of **Harvest Snaps Green Pea Snack Crisps Lightly Salted** has 5 grams of each.



## CRACKERS

**Triscuit Original Thin Crisps** are 100 percent whole grain and reasonably low in sodium (170 mg per serving)—just what you want in a cracker.



## FROZEN YOGURT

Fro-yo can have a cleaner ingredients list than even many "diet" ice creams. CR's taste testers say **Blue Bunny Vanilla Bean Frozen Yogurt** has big vanilla and dairy flavors, for 140 calories and 14 grams of added sugars per  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup.





## 'I wanted my own food source.'

MARTHA MCPHEE  
AND HER FAMILY, NEW JERSEY

**W**HEN THE coronavirus hit, Manhattanite Martha McPhee knew exactly where she wanted to be: her childhood home in rural Ringoes, N.J., where her mother still lived. She'd be sheltering with her husband and two kids, ages 20 and 16, and knew it would be easier to live there. And it meant she could care for her mother, who has dementia.

After moving in, McPhee, a novelist and professor, decided to raise chicks and plant a vegetable garden. "I understood that this pandemic was going to go on for a long time," she says. "I wanted to

create my own food source."

McPhee remembered hearing that planting a garden had buoyed her grandmother during the 1918 flu pandemic. That survivalist instinct ran deep: "When my kids were little, we played a car game called 'What would you bring to the zombie apocalypse?' And I always said, 'Seeds,'" McPhee says. When the shutdowns started, "I knew we weren't quite experiencing an apocalypse, but I could sense that it was really bad."

McPhee went all-in, planting arugula, radicchio, kale, garlic, beets, radishes, tomatoes, zucchini, beans, eggplant, peas, peppers, blueberries, and more.

"I started with onions, and they came up right away. It was thrilling," she says.

The harvest provided the family, as well as friends and neighbors, with a steady supply of produce well into the fall.

Taking care of the chickens proved to be a stress reliever—even the dirty work. McPhee's mother spent hours watching the chicks, and her daughter named them and cleaned the coop. "I can't tell you how exciting it was when the first egg came in July," McPhee says. The flock now lays about nine colorful eggs each day.

The family's meals are now fresh and varied, and they never

want for eggs. In addition to McPhee's quiches, her son has perfected his Hollandaise sauce with egg yolks, her daughter learned to make angel food cake with egg whites, and they're all enjoying noodles made with fresh eggs.

Another bonus: McPhee is now more aware of the seasonality of produce. "We're so used to going to the store and getting whatever we want whenever we want," she says. But now she delights in what's new and ripe.

### CR'S ADVICE SOURCE LOCAL

Supermarket shortages, hikes in food prices, and having to stay home have led many consumers to find alternatives to going to the supermarket. Some simply relied on deliveries: In CR's survey, the percentage of people who said they used grocery delivery or pick-up services went from 27 percent pre-pandemic to 49 percent. Like McPhee, 15 percent of Americans said they grew fruits and vegetables more, too. If you don't have the inclination or the space for a garden, you can take advantage of other people's farms.

**SUPPORT FARMS.** Farmers markets have always been a grocery store alternative, and because they're often outside, may be safer. Or you can join a CSA (community supported agriculture) program. You pay the farmer at the start of the season and receive a share of the harvest weekly or biweekly.

**CONSIDER MAIL ORDER.** Companies such as D'Artagnan Foods, Porter Road, and White Oak Pastures sell meat and poultry from animals they've sustainably raised themselves or partner with small farmers.

**GROW YOUR OWN.** Plant vegetables in containers on a patio, deck, balcony, or windowsill. Research suggests that gardening increases mental well-being, and that kids who eat homegrown produce tend to consume more fruits and vegetables per day.

### BACKYARD BOUNTY

Raising chickens and eating their eggs gave McPhee's family emotional as well as physical nourishment.





NEWS & EXPERT  
ADVICE TO  
KEEP YOU  
AHEAD OF  
THE CURVE™

# ROAD REPORT

## FIRST DRIVE

### Genesis GV80

The GV80 is the first SUV from Hyundai's upscale Genesis brand. Primarily a two-row SUV, a tight third row comes as an option. It also comes with one of two turbocharged engine choices: a four-cylinder and a V6. The V6 delivered robust and effortless acceleration. The GV80 looks as luxurious as it feels and is loaded with style and the latest high-tech features, though the infotainment system is tricky to use.

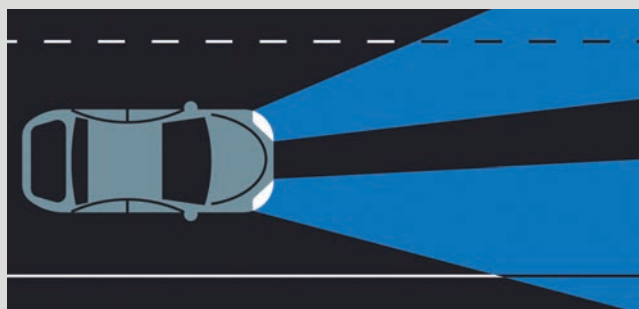
**CR's take:** The GV80 is as smooth, agile, quiet, and refined as a luxury European SUV. We only wish its controls weren't quite so complex.



Price range: \$48,900-\$65,050  
Destination charge: \$1,025  
Price as driven: \$63,400

## TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

### Signs That Your Headlights Aren't Properly Aligned



Getting hammered by a pothole can knock your headlights out of alignment, **making driving at night unsafe**. If you suddenly notice that you can't see as much of the road as you usually do, **your headlights may have shifted downward**. If drivers of oncoming vehicles start flashing their high beams at you even when yours are not on, your headlights may have shifted upward. In either case, head to a repair shop to **have them checked and aligned** if necessary. It's a quick job that should cost about \$60 and could prevent a crash.

## THE VITAL STATISTIC

# \$910

Average annual cost of ownership of a BMW in year 10. BMW has the highest annual cost of ownership at that point. Chrysler has the lowest, at \$208.

Source: Consumer Reports survey analysis.

## RECALL



### Toyota & Lexus

Toyota has expanded a January 2020 recall to include an additional 1.5 million Toyota and Lexus cars, trucks, and SUVs. Fuel pumps in the vehicles could cause the engine to stall or run rough, which could lead to an accident. More than 3.3 million Lexus vehicles from model years 2013-2020 and Toyotas from model years 2014-2020 are affected.

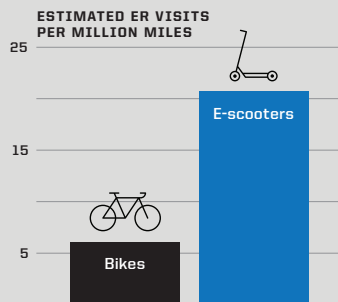
**What to do:** Toyota and Lexus dealers will replace faulty fuel pumps at no charge. Contact Toyota customer service at 800-331-4331 or Lexus customer service at 800-255-3987 to find out if your car is included in the recall.

## TRENDS


### E-Scooter Rider Injuries

A recent study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in Washington, D.C., found that e-scooter riders are twice as likely as cyclists to be hurt due to potholes, uneven pavement, and

poles. They also have more emergency room visits per million miles traveled. "E-scooters can be fun and useful, but riding them can also pose safety hazards," says William Wallace, CR's manager of safety policy.



Source: IIHS study conducted in Washington, D.C.



Cadillac's Super Cruise uses a camera to monitor the driver's eyes. Bright lights will flash on the steering wheel to grab the driver's attention if the system senses that the driver isn't engaged.





One of the reasons Super Cruise tops our ratings is because it can be used only on premapped, divided highways. It also warns the driver about upcoming tricky road situations.

# The Road to Self-Driving Cars

CR rates 17 of the latest active driving assistance systems, one of which could be on the next new car you buy.

by **Mike Monticello**

**Y**OU MIGHT HAVE HEARD of Tesla's active driving assistance suite, known as Autopilot, that can control steering and speed to assist the driver. What you might not know is that most

automakers now offer similar systems on their cars, and it's quite likely that the next new vehicle you buy will be equipped with one.

Two years ago, Consumer Reports evaluated and ranked four of these systems—from Cadillac, Nissan/Infiniti, Tesla, and Volvo—for the first time. Since then, these advanced technologies have become more mainstream, and CR's testing this year features 17 systems from 23 automakers.

For this evaluation, we looked at the comparative performance of the vehicles' active driving assistance systems, which refers to when lane keeping assistance (LKA) and adaptive cruise control (ACC) are engaged and working together to keep the car in its lane and control speed through acceleration and braking, so the car remains a set distance from vehicles ahead. If a vehicle had both of these features, it was considered for inclusion in our evaluations,



regardless of the level of automation the automaker claims.

Active driving assistance does not make a car “self-driving.” It’s intended to support the driver. These systems are also sometimes incorrectly referred to as “semi-autonomous.” In reality, a well-designed system can help relieve driver fatigue and stress, such as on long highway road trips or in stop-and-go traffic. They can work differently, though: Some systems give steering assist only as the car begins to leave the lane; others work continuously to keep the car centered within lane lines. We also think these systems should help to ensure that the driver stays engaged.

Cadillac’s Super Cruise remained our top-rated system because it’s the only one that uses direct driver monitoring to detect whether the driver is paying attention. The system uses a small camera facing the driver’s eyes to assess whether they’re watching the road ahead. If the system determines that a driver isn’t paying attention, it delivers multiple warnings—such as bright red lights on the upper rim of the steering wheel—to grab the driver’s attention. If the driver still does not react, the system will start to slow the car down on its

own, eventually bringing it to a stop. It also will call for help. General Motors told CR that Super Cruise will be on 22 of its vehicles by 2023.

CR worked with the European New Car Assessment Programme to help develop our test methodology. CR’s evaluation of active driving assistance systems also took into account the work of the National Transportation Safety Board, the federal agency known for investigating plane crashes and other significant transportation safety incidents. In studying deadly highway crashes involving these systems, NTSB investigators have noted the risk of “automation complacency,” when drivers rely too much on automated systems and tune out, as well as the foreseeable misuse of these systems in unsafe locations or conditions, such as on unmarked roads or in extreme weather.

## CAPABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

**WHAT WE LOOKED FOR:** We judged how well each LKA system kept the vehicle in the center of the lane, and how smoothly and intuitively the ACC adjusted its speed and distance behind other cars in traffic.

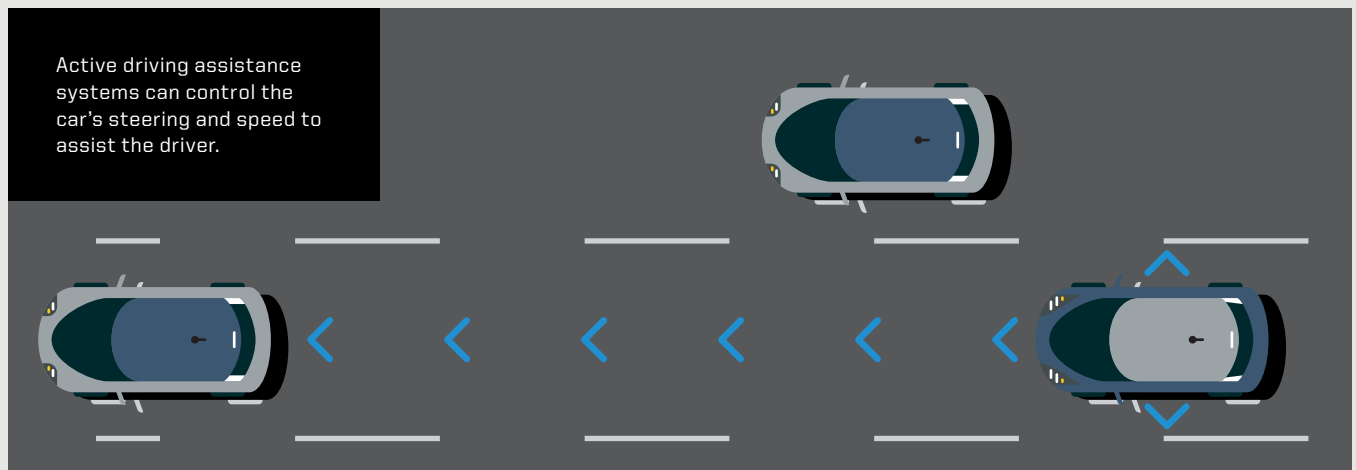
A good LKA system will keep the

vehicle positioned in the center of the lane by giving mild steering corrections. The better systems will use corrective steering to bring the car back to the center of the lane before a lane departure occurs—not as it occurs or after. The steering corrections can feel like gentle tugs on the wheel. CR’s research shows that drivers expect the LKA to consistently keep the vehicle well within the lane boundaries.

ACC systems should bring the car to a full stop, then automatically accelerate when the car ahead begins to move again in traffic. Drivers should be able to set a preferred following distance and adjust the acceleration and deceleration of the system.

**WHO’S ON THE RIGHT TRACK:** When it comes to LKA, Tesla performed the best in our tests, with Audi, Cadillac, and Lincoln close behind. Systems that scored the best at controlling the car’s speed were those from Audi, Mercedes-Benz, and Porsche, which let the driver adjust how quickly the ACC speeds up and slows down.

**ROOM TO IMPROVE:** Systems that didn’t perform well, such as those from Buick and Mazda, attempted to assist the driver with corrective steering only after the car was already departing the lane.



## KEEPING THE DRIVER ENGAGED

**WHAT WE LOOKED FOR:** Active driving assistance systems should encourage drivers to provide their own steering inputs without the system going into a standby mode or shutting off completely. “Further, if the system can no longer control the vehicle’s speed or steering, there should be an immediate audible warning,” says Kelly Funkhouser, CR’s head of connected and automated vehicle testing.

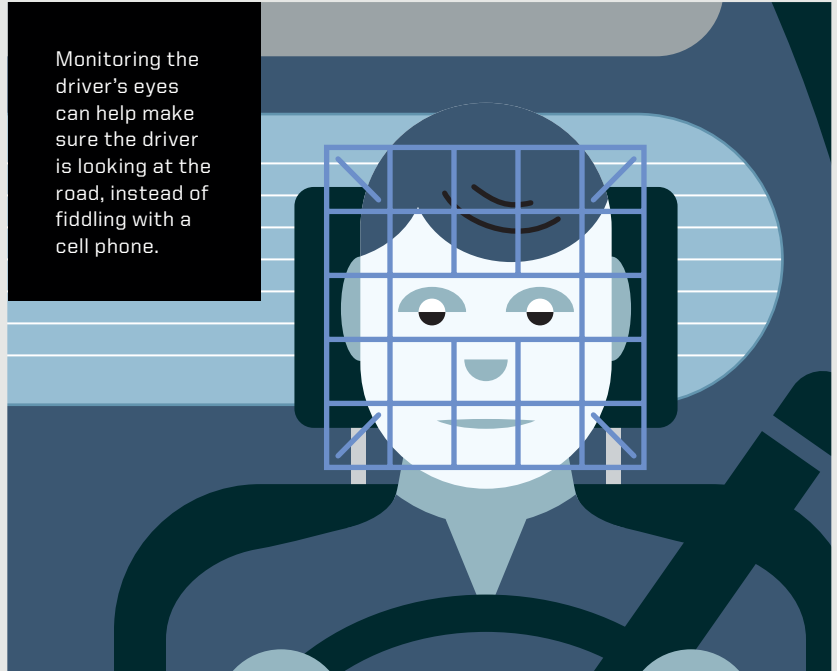
When a system is controlling the car’s speed and steering, there’s a risk that a driver might engage in distracting behavior, such as picking up a cell phone. That’s why camera-based driver monitoring systems are the most effective at making sure the driver is ready to take control.

**WHO’S ON THE RIGHT TRACK:** Cadillac’s infrared eye tracker is the clear winner for ensuring that the driver’s eyes are open and looking forward. Audi, Lincoln, and Mercedes-Benz allow drivers to take over the steering within the lane lines without the system shutting off, which we like because these systems should promote driver engagement, not discourage it.

**ROOM TO IMPROVE:** Most systems we tested don’t make any noise to indicate that the system is stopping its active steering, and give a warning only in the instrument cluster. We think this is inadequate. The Cadillac and Tesla systems don’t allow drivers to make abrupt movements, such as steering around a pothole, without shutting off. Cadillac’s system goes into standby mode when the driver inputs any amount of steering, and it’s finicky about reengaging.

All the systems, other than Super Cruise, require the driver to touch the steering wheel every once in a while, but that doesn’t mean the driver is looking at the road. Although BMW

Monitoring the driver’s eyes can help make sure the driver is looking at the road, instead of fiddling with a cell phone.



and Subaru vehicles have an infrared camera, it is not used to continually monitor the driver while the active driving assistance is engaged.

## EASE OF USE

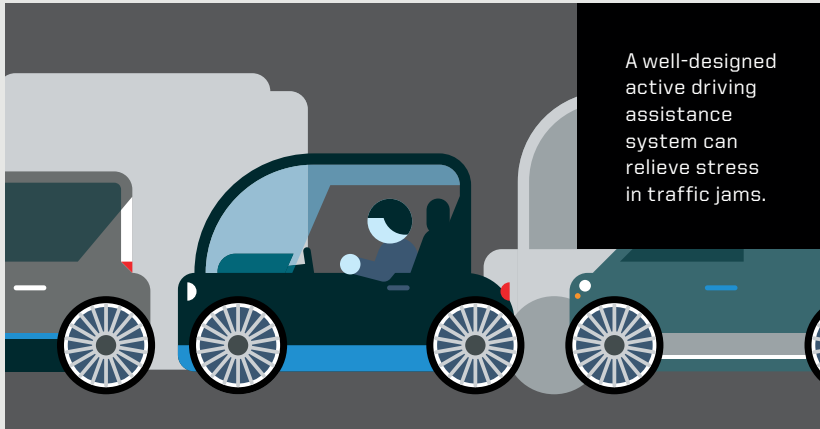
**WHAT WE LOOKED FOR:** For many people, the next new car they buy will be their first experience with an active driving assistance system. That’s why it’s important for auto manufacturers to make the features easy to use. Most of the vehicles we tested were equipped with two lane keeping systems: Typically, one holds the car in the center of the lane, and the other gives steering assist only when the vehicle has crossed a lane line. When both of these LKA features are on, this complex interaction can be confusing. A single LKA system that performs well at centering the car is what drivers want and expect.

Our testers evaluated how easy it was for drivers to engage the systems

and make adjustments to the settings. They assessed whether the displays provided information about what the vehicle “sees” via the sensors so that a driver might know why the system is behaving a certain way.

**WHO’S ON THE RIGHT TRACK:** The Hyundai system allows the steering and speed controls to be activated independently, so drivers can decide exactly how much assistance they want to use. Buick, Land Rover, Mazda, Nissan, Porsche, and Volkswagen have single LKA systems, which are less confusing to use.

**ROOM TO IMPROVE:** BMW and Hyundai have three lane keeping systems, each one behaving differently depending on speed and other factors. With BMW and Hyundai, one lane keeping system is activated through the lane departure warning (LDW) menu, another is turned on via the steering wheel controls, and the third can be activated in traffic jams. We think there should be only one lane keeping system across model lineups.



## CLEAR WHEN SAFE TO USE

**WHAT WE LOOKED FOR:** Active driving assistance systems are safest to use in conjunction with direct driver monitoring to ensure that the driver is able to take control in an emergency. “Without effective driver monitoring, these systems should be used only in lower-risk situations, such as on long highway drives or in traffic jams,” Funkhouser says. “Plus, they should be able to be activated only in environments without pedestrians—and also not in other tricky situations, such as at intersections and in complicated traffic patterns.”

We evaluated the systems in terms of how clearly they communicate when drivers should—and should not—be using the technology.

**WHO’S ON THE RIGHT TRACK:** Cadillac’s Super Cruise stood out in this category because it can be used only on

premapped, divided highways and because it always monitors the driver when the system is in use. Plus, Super Cruise warns the driver in advance, by flashing a light bar on top of the steering wheel, when there is an upcoming lane merge or a complex situation that might require extra driver attention.

**ROOM TO IMPROVE:** Because none of the other systems employ direct driver monitoring, they should be restricted to lower-risk situations. Yet the systems from Audi, BMW, Tesla, and Volvo allowed our drivers to operate them in residential areas when the road had only a single center lane line, potentially leading to unsafe situations.

## UNRESPONSIVE DRIVER

**WHAT WE LOOKED FOR:** We evaluated each system’s process for warning the driver to pay attention in the case

of a medical emergency or if the driver falls asleep. We also evaluated how the system might try to wake them up. Active driving assistance systems should help keep drivers safe when they need it the most.

Although most vehicles in our testing don’t monitor the driver’s eyes, most will deliver an alert if the driver is judged to be inattentive for a significant period, through audible beeps, flashing lights, and even hard braking. Some systems also use steering and speed control to bring the car to a stop if the driver is unresponsive. A few will turn on the hazard lights and call for help via the in-car telematics or a paired smartphone. “We’d like to see developers consider providing this feature even if the driver isn’t using the active driving assistance system, along with the additional step of steering the vehicle onto the shoulder of the road when a driver becomes unresponsive,” Funkhouser says.

**WHO’S ON THE RIGHT TRACK:** Cadillac’s Super Cruise monitors the driver’s eyes and will provide warnings if it thinks the driver is not paying attention. The rapid hard braking of Nissan’s system is an effective way to wake the driver if other warnings are ignored.

**ROOM TO IMPROVE:** Systems that simply stop providing steering all of a sudden without giving the driver an audible warning—such as those in Buick, Land Rover, Mazda, and Volvo vehicles—aren’t as helpful safety-wise as they should be.

## HOW WE DID THE TESTING

**THE 17 ACTIVE DRIVING** assistance systems we tested were put through their paces around the track at our 327-acre Auto Test Center and on a 30-mile route on

nearby public roads between June and September 2020. Each system was rated for its performance in 36 tests. The vehicles we tested generally reflect the performance of other models within each automaker’s lineup, but there can be differences among models,

model years, and packages that could affect some parameters of how the systems operate.

Also, some automakers can change their software on current and future vehicles through over-the-air updates. Electric carmaker Tesla, for example, does this frequently, which

means that certain aspects of its cars change often.

CR’s testers looked at the way each of the systems performed in five categories: capability and performance, keeping the driver engaged, ease of use, clear when safe to use, and unresponsive driver.

# ACTIVE DRIVING ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS

System and Tested Vehicle	Overall Score	Capability and Performance	Keeping the Driver Engaged	Ease of Use	Clear When Safe to Use	Unresponsive Driver
<b>Cadillac Super Cruise</b> Cadillac CT6	68	8/10	7/10	3/10	8/10	9/10
<b>Tesla Autopilot</b> Tesla Model Y	58	9/10	3/10	7/10	2/10	6/10
<b>Ford/Lincoln Co-Pilot360</b> Lincoln Corsair	51	8/10	4/10	3/10	4/10	5/10
<b>Subaru Eyesight</b> Subaru Outback	48	7/10	4/10	3/10	4/10	5/10
<b>Audi Driver Assistance Plus</b> Audi e-Tron	47	8/10	3/10	3/10	2/10	6/10
<b>Mercedes-Benz Driver Assistance</b> Mercedes-Benz GLS450	45	6/10	4/10	4/10	2/10	5/10
<b>Hyundai SmartSense, Kia Drive Wise</b> Hyundai Palisade	45	5/10	4/10	5/10	4/10	4/10
<b>BMW Active Driving Assistance Pro</b> BMW 330i	44	7/10	3/10	3/10	2/10	6/10
<b>Honda Sensing/Acura Sensing</b> Honda CR-V Hybrid	42	6/10	4/10	2/10	4/10	4/10
<b>Nissan/Infiniti ProPilot Assist</b> Nissan Leaf	41	5/10	3/10	3/10	4/10	7/10
<b>Porsche Active Safe</b> Porsche Taycan	40	4/10	3/10	6/10	2/10	5/10
<b>Volvo Pilot Assist</b> Volvo S60	40	6/10	3/10	3/10	2/10	5/10
<b>Toyota/Lexus Safety Sense 2.0</b> Toyota Corolla	40	5/10	4/10	2/10	4/10	5/10
<b>Volkswagen Driver Assistance</b> Volkswagen Passat	40	4/10	3/10	6/10	2/10	5/10
<b>Land Rover Driver Assist</b> Range Rover Evoque	39	4/10	3/10	6/10	2/10	4/10
<b>Buick/Chevrolet Driver Confidence</b> Buick Encore GX	36	3/10	3/10	5/10	2/10	6/10
<b>Mazda i-Activsense</b> Mazda CX-30	28	3/10	2/10	5/10	2/10	1/10

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Consumer Reports also tested an aftermarket system called Comma Two, which is manufactured by Comma.ai. Installed on a Toyota Corolla test car, the system outperformed, in most respects, the systems that already come as original equipment on vehicles. We think it sets new standards for the industry. Because CR does not currently recommend these types of modifications for consumer vehicles, the system is not included in our rankings. CR also contacted automakers for this article regarding challenges we identified with their systems, and their responses can be found at [CR.org/adas0221](https://www.consumerreports.org/adas0221).





# Auto Recall Questions Answered



**AUTOMAKERS RECALL** tens of millions of vehicles annually to correct faults that threaten safety. Often these issues aren't discovered until a model has been on the road for months or even years. They can range from software problems that could cause a car to stall unexpectedly to fuel leaks that could lead to a fire. Some recalls affect millions of vehicles, while others might include only a dozen or so. But every safety recall, no matter how small it seems, is important and needs to be addressed. "A safety recall means that a problem has been identified that puts people at risk," says William Wallace, manager of safety policy at CR. "Every recall should be taken seriously." Below, our auto experts answer some of the most common questions about recalls and share advice on how to find out—and what to do—if a car you own or want to buy has a recall.

## How Are Recalls Announced?

Car companies are required to send recall notices by first-class mail, but these can arrive weeks after a recall is first announced online (or may never arrive if the owner has moved). For the fastest alert, sign up for a recall reminder service—such as our Car Recall Tracker, at [CR.org/carrecalls](https://www.consumerreports.org/carrecalls)—or through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's SaferCar app. To learn whether your car has an outstanding recall, go to [nhtsa.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls) and enter its 17-digit vehicle identification number (VIN), usually found on the driver's-side dashboard and viewable through the windshield.

## Are Recall Repairs Free?

Most of the time. Federal law requires all safety recall repairs to be provided free of charge up to 15 years after a car was sold to the first owner. But if your car is older than that, you're not necessarily out of luck, Wallace says. "Automakers and dealers will often voluntarily provide a safety recall repair for free, even for cars older than 15 years, so always ask." The automaker is not obligated to provide a loaner vehicle while the recall repair is being made, but some do anyway, when extensive work is needed. Many recall repairs can be completed in just an hour or two.

## Can a Car for Sale Have an Open Recall?

Unfortunately, yes. Federal law specifically bans the sale of new cars with open recalls, but no similar law exists to protect people who purchase used cars. Before you buy a used car, enter its VIN at [nhtsa.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls) to find out whether it has any recalls that have not been addressed. If you're buying from a used-car dealership, ask it to remedy any open recalls before you take delivery. If you're buying from a private seller, you might need to take the car to the dealer yourself to have the recall-related issue repaired. If that's the case, make sure to do it as soon as you can.

## Should I Worry If My Car Is Recalled?

Not as long as you have the recall repair made in a timely way. "Recalls can be inconvenient, but they're evidence that automakers and regulators are taking safety seriously, and they help keep the vehicles we're driving as safe as they can possibly be," says Jennifer Stockburger, director of operations at Consumer Reports' Auto Test Center. "While recalls can vary in terms of the possible risk posed, manufacturers do not issue them unless safety is somehow threatened, so you should always have the repairs made as soon as possible."



## ROAD TEST

EXCLUSIVE RATINGS & REVIEWS  
BASED ON TESTING AT CR'S  
327-ACRE AUTO TEST CENTER



COMPACT SUVs

### Toyota RAV4 Prime

Powerful, Luxurious, and Efficient

79

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 85

**HIGHS** Acceleration, part-time electric driving, ride, controls, fuel economy

**LOWS** Long stopping distance, high-pitched noise in Reverse

**POWERTRAIN** 302-hp, 2.5-liter 4-cylinder engine with plug-in hybrid; continuously variable transmission; all-wheel drive

**FUEL/RANGE** 34 mpg on regular fuel; 42-mile EV range

**PRICE**  
\$38,100–\$41,425 base price range  
\$45,923 as tested

**THE PRIME PLUG-IN** hybrid transforms Toyota's small SUV, giving it abundant power and a refined ride to go along with its fuel-economy benefits. We think it's a good option for buyers who want an EV but don't want to worry about plugging in on long trips.

We were able to drive the Prime about 40 miles on all-electric power alone, and we got 34 mpg overall when it transitioned to hybrid mode. Drivers can use EV mode when they want to, such as saving it for an urban stretch of a commute rather than on the highway. It takes almost 5 hours to charge the battery on a 240-volt outlet (12 hours on 120V) for the 3.3kW onboard charger. The optional 6.6kW charger shortens that time.

The Prime's combined 302 hp makes it quick and quiet, with all of the power immediately available, channeled to the road by the standard all-wheel

drive. The electric motors give enough assist that the engine rarely has to strain, mostly eliminating engine noise that plagues the regular RAV4. The weight of the large battery and suspension changes contribute to the Prime's comfortable ride quality. Stopping distances are a bit long, and the brakes grab too quickly, the only shortcomings we found.

The interior isn't much different from a regular RAV4 aside from the upgraded soft-touch surfaces and synthetic leather seats in our XSE. Most controls remain clear and easy to use, and the cargo and passenger room are unchanged. FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and BSW come standard.

Yes, the Prime is expensive, but its price premium is somewhat offset by a \$7,500 federal tax credit, which is available because of the Prime's large battery.



MIDSIZE SUVs

### Toyota Venza

Fresh Hybrid Offers Highs and Lows

78

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 75

**HIGHS** Fuel economy, ease of access

**LOWS** Controls, visibility, road noise, cargo capacity

**POWERTRAIN** 219-hp, 2.5-liter 4-cylinder hybrid engine; continuously variable transmission; all-wheel drive

**FUEL** 37 mpg on regular fuel

**PRICE**  
\$32,470–\$39,800 base price range  
\$40,160 as tested

**TOYOTA RESURRECTED THE** Venza nameplate for its fashionable new SUV, which is sized between the RAV4 and the Highlander. Unlike most midsize five-passenger models, the Venza is available only as an all-wheel-drive hybrid; it shares a drivetrain with the smaller, less expensive RAV4 Hybrid.

We're impressed by the Venza's superb fuel economy of 37 mpg overall. In addition, we appreciate some of the optional and unusual features, such as the dimmable panoramic glass roof. But unintuitive controls and limited visibility are downsides for this new midsize SUV.

Contrasts define the Venza. The ride is firm yet comfortable, and it's quiet at low speeds when the SUV is running only on electric power. But road noise is noticeable, particularly when driving on coarse pavement,

and it can get quite loud when the engine kicks in.

Handling is responsive in everyday driving, but the Venza's body leans noticeably when the driver makes quick moves, such as swerving to avoid an obstacle. Acceleration is on a par with nonhybrid SUVs in the same class.

The interior is attractive and well-assembled. But the optional larger touch screen is cluttered, and the buttons that control climate and other key functions are flush with the dashboard and impossible to discern by feel. What's worse is that the buttons don't always respond immediately when pressed.

A tapered rear design makes for modest cargo room and lousy side and rear visibility. Rear-seat space is decent for two adults but snug for three.

All Venzas come standard with a suite of advanced safety and driver assist features.



LARGE SUVs

## Chevrolet Suburban

Super-Sized SUV

**60**

OVERALL  
SCORE

**THE REDESIGNED SUBURBAN** is an extremely functional, comfortable, and quiet three-row SUV. This icon is the answer for those who need seven- or eight-passenger capacity, cavernous space, and the ability to tow a boat or a camper.

The standard 5.3-liter V8 engine delivers ample power anytime. The smooth-shifting 10-speed automatic transmission works well with the engine. But fuel economy is only 16 mpg overall, showing no significant improvement from the previous generation.

The new independent rear suspension pays dividends in ride, handling, and interior room. The standard suspension absorbs bumps and rough roads effectively.

We prefer the Premier trim with its adaptive suspension, ensuring a more composed ride and responsive handling. It's a very tall step up into the cabin for kids and shorter

**ROAD-TEST SCORE 76**

**HIGHS** Interior room, seat comfort, ride, quietness, infotainment

**LOWS** Braking, gear selector, fuel economy, agility, high step-in, tall hood hurts visibility

**POWERTRAIN** 355-hp, 5.3-liter V8 engine; 10-speed automatic transmission; four-wheel drive

**FUEL** 16 mpg on regular fuel

**PRICE**  
\$51,700–\$75,300 base price range  
\$74,375 as tested

adults, but the standard running boards help.

The interior is stunningly quiet, like a luxury sedan, and the front seats are wide, roomy, and supportive. The two captain's chairs for the middle row are also generously sized, and the third-row seat can accommodate adults. There's storage space everywhere you look.

We're not fans of the push-button gear selector because it's tricky to operate without looking directly at it. Other controls are large and easy to use. The infotainment screen is a cinch to navigate, with clear, vivid graphics. The Suburban's unusually tall hood compromises forward visibility, a concern in busy, pedestrian-filled urban areas.

AEB with pedestrian detection and FCW are standard, but BSW, LKA, and LDW are optional.



MIDSIZE SUVs

## Land Rover Defender

Safari-Ready Classic Is Reborn

**45**

OVERALL  
SCORE

**THIS NEW VERSION** of Land Rover's classic go-anywhere SUV is quite charming and civilized. But frustrating controls, unimpressive fuel economy, and a high step-in count against it.

With the optional mild-hybrid six-cylinder, the Defender 110 has strong acceleration, and the transmission is very smooth. But we were frustrated with the slow-responding stop/start feature that left us hanging before restarting. Fuel economy of 18 mpg overall is also disappointing.

The ride is steady and controlled, but it skews firm. Handling is relatively responsive, although there's no escaping the feeling that it's top-heavy when cornering. The Defender's pronounced body lean happens earlier in turns than in some of its competitors, but the ESC ultimately keeps it safe and in control.

The interior feels ready for

**ROAD-TEST SCORE 61**

**HIGHS** Acceleration, off-road ability, character

**LOWS** Braking, controls, agility, step-in height, fuel economy, rear visibility

**POWERTRAIN** 395-hp, 3.0-liter 6-cylinder turbocharged engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

**FUEL** 18 mpg on premium fuel

**PRICE**  
\$46,100–\$83,000 base price range  
\$70,710 as tested

a safari, with a muted palette and rugged touches such as intentionally exposed screws. The seats are comfortable and supportive, and there's plenty of passenger room.

The infotainment system is distracting to use. Common audio and climate tasks are confusing and require multiple steps. It's compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, but that's small consolation.

Thanks to the driver-controlled Terrain Response system, the Defender can adapt to conditions varying from mud to rocks by customizing its ride height, four-wheel-drive operation, and traction control. An array of cameras is helpful for negotiating tight trails and parking spaces.

FCW, AEB, BSW, and LKA are standard. Adaptive cruise control and RCTW are optional.

**Ratings** ➤ **Full Spectrum** SUVs come in all shapes, sizes, and prices, as seen in this month's selections. These models go from maximum efficiency to maximum capability.

Make + Model		Overall Score	Survey Results		Road-Test Results													Advanced Safety				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall MPG/MPGe	Seat comfort front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking 60-0 mph, ft.	Suitcases + duffels/ Cargo volume, cu. ft.	FCW	AEB, city	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW	
SUVs \$35,000–\$45,000																						
✓	Subaru Outback 2.4T	86	⬇	⬆	91	24	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	54.0	7.1	132	37.0	S	S	S	S	0	
✓	Ford Edge 2.0T	83	⬆	⬇	84	22	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	52.0	7.7	129	39.0	S	S	S	S	S	
✓	Toyota Highlander Hybrid 2.5H	83	⬆	⬆	84	35	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	49.5	8.0	141	41.0	S	S	S	S	0	
✓	Subaru Crosstrek 2.0H+E	81	⬆	⬆	82	33 <sup>†</sup> / 90 <sup>‡</sup>	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	⬆	53.0	9.0	129	21.5	0	0	0	0	0	
✓	Honda CR-V Hybrid 2.0H	81	⬆	⬇	80	35	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	53.0	8.5	133	34.0	S	S	S	S	0	
✓	Nissan Murano 3.5L	79	⬆	⬇	77	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	50.5	7.7	131	33.5	S	S	S	S	S	
✓	Toyota RAV4 Prime 2.5H+E	79	⬇	⬆	85	34 <sup>†</sup> / 94 <sup>‡</sup>	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	51.0	6.3	142	30.5	S	S	S	S	S	
✓	Toyota Venza 2.5H	78	⬆	⬆	75	37	⬆ / ⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	51.0	7.8	137	26.5	S	S	S	S	S	
✓	Toyota RAV4 Hybrid 2.5H	72	⬇	⬇	76	37	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	52.0	7.8	139	30.5	S	S	S	S	0	
	Chevrolet Blazer 3.6L	67	⬇	⬇	83	19	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	54.5	6.4	130	34.5	0	0	0	0	0	
	Honda Passport 3.5L	64	⬇	⬇	79	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	53.5	6.4	135	39.0	S	S	S	S	0	
	Volkswagen Atlas Cross Sport 2.0T	64	⬇	⬇	81	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	52.0	8.7	131	37.5	S	S	S	S	S	
	Ford Escape Hybrid 2.5H	50	⬇	⬇	82	34	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	51.0	8.3	128	30.5	S	S	S	S	S	
SUVs \$55,000–\$75,000																						
✓	Lexus GX460 4.6L	79	⬆	⬇	70	17	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	48.0	7.5	136	36.5	S	S	S	S	S	
	Jeep Grand Cherokee 3.6L	67	⬇	⬆	80	18	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	50.0	8.0	134	36.5	0	0	–	0	S	
	Toyota 4Runner 4.0L	64	⬆	⬆	55	18	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	48.0	7.7	131	44.5	S	S	S	S	–	
	Land Rover Discovery 3.0SDC	46	⬇	⬇	71	17	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	47.5	7.3	138	42.5	S	S	S	S	S	
	Land Rover Defender 3.0T	45	⬇	⬇	61	18	⬆ / ⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	49.0	6.9	147	43.0	S	S	S	S	S	
	Jeep Wrangler 3.6L	29	⬇	⬆	36	18	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	49.0	7.3	144	41.5	0	0	–	0	0	
SUVs (3-ROW) \$55,000–\$75,000																						
✓	Ford Expedition Max 3.5T	69	⬇	⬆	73	16	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	47.0	7.3	143	66.0	S	S	S	S	S	
✓	Toyota Sequoia 5.7L	68	⬆	⬆	60	15	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	47.0	7.1	146	61.0	S	S	S	S	S	
	Lincoln Navigator 3.5T	64	⬇	⬆	65	16	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	47.0	6.2	144	56.0	S	S	S	S	S	
	Chevrolet Suburban 5.3L	60	⬇	⬆	76	16	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	49.0	7.6	145	70.0	S	S	S	0	0	
	Chevrolet Tahoe 5.3L	58	⬇	⬆	73	17	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	49.0	7.8	145	58.6	S	S	S	0	0	
	Nissan Armada 5.6L	55	⬇	⬇	69	14	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	51.0	6.7	133	46.5	S	S	S	S	S	
➤	Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at <a href="https://www.cars.com">CR.org/cars</a> . When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.																					

**HOW WE TEST:** Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score**, which factors in **Road-Test Results**, **Predicted reliability**, **Owner satisfaction**, and

**Advanced Safety**, which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as forward collision warning, automatic

emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning. – means no such safety system is offered; 0 means that it's available but not as standard equipment; S

means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.



## Index

## A

Air fryers	Oct 20, 44
ratings	Oct 20, 54
Air purifiers	Mar 20, 13
effective for coronavirus	Jul 20, 16
Air travel	
refunds	Jul 20, 9
safety	May 20, 7
COVID-19	Jan 21, 7
Appliances	
for backyard BBQ	Jul 20, 17
buying online	Dec 20, 40
countertop	Oct 20, 44
ratings	Oct 20, 52
easy-to-clean	Aug 20, 18
reliability ratings	Aug 20, 42
retailer ratings	Dec 20, 45
timeline	Jan 21, 14
Arbitration	Mar 20, 38

## AUTOMOBILE RATINGS

Audi Q7	Oct 20, 63
BMW 228i Gran Coupe	Nov 20, 63
Buick Encore GX	Sep 20, 64
Cadillac CT4	Nov 20, 63
Cadillac CT5	Oct 20, 63
Chevrolet Silverado	Jul 20, 64
Chevrolet Suburban	Feb 21, 60
Chevrolet Tahoe	Jan 21, 59
Chevrolet Trailblazer	Nov 20, 64
Ford Escape Hybrid	May 20, 59
Honda CR-V Hybrid	Jul 20, 64; Dec 20, 60
Hyundai Sonata	May 20, 60
Hybrid	Dec 20, 59
Hyundai Venue	May 20, 59
Kia K5	Jan 21, 59
Kia Seltos	Aug 20, 64
Land Rover Defender	Feb 21, 60
Mazda CX-30	Jun 20, 60
Mercedes-Benz GLA	Jan 21, 60
Mercedes-Benz GLB	Aug 20, 64
Mercedes-Benz GLS	Mar 20, 59
Nissan Sentra	Oct 20, 64
Nissan Versa	Mar 20, 59
Porsche Taycan	Dec 20, 59
Ram 1500 Turbodiesel	Dec 20, 60
Subaru Legacy	Mar 20, 60
Tesla Model Y	Sep 20, 64; Jan 21, 60
Toyota Highlander	Jun 20, 60
Hybrid	Oct 20, 64
Toyota RAV4 Prime	Feb 21, 59
Toyota Supra	Mar 20, 60
Toyota Venza	Feb 21, 59
Volkswagen Atlas Cross Sport	Nov 20, 64
Volkswagen Passat	May 20, 60

## AUTOMOBILES & AUTO EQUIPMENT

Best & worst lists	Apr 20, 13
Bicycle mounting	May 20, 16
Brand Report Card	Apr 20, 14
Buying from home	Aug 20, 56
Car care during coronavirus	Jul 20, 63
Cars for your driving style	May 20, 54
Coming in 2020	Apr 20, 34
Data collection and sharing	Jun 20, 54
Driver assistance systems	Feb 21, 52
naming standards	Apr 20, 26
ratings	Feb 21, 57
risks	Jun 20, 7
Electric vehicles	Apr 20, 28
overall costs	Jan 21, 7
Ford Bronco preview	Oct 20, 62
Fuel-efficiency ratings	Nov 20, 61
Gas-saving technologies	Nov 20, 56
Home EV chargers	Dec 20, 58
Infotainment systems	Sep 20, 56
built-in vs. smartphone	Sep 20, 59
troubleshooting	Sep 20, 62
Insurance pricing practices	Apr 20, 21
Luxury cars	Jul 20, 58
timeline	Jul 20, 16
Profiles, 2020	Apr 20, 48
Ratings, 2020	Apr 20, 38
Reliability	Apr 20, 86; Jan 21, 50
ratings	Apr 20, 88; Jan 21, 56
Repair	
certified shops	Jan 21, 16
timeline	Mar 20, 14

THIS INDEX LISTS ALL THE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE MAGAZINE OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS (INCLUDING THIS ISSUE). FOR INDEXES COVERING THE PAST FIVE YEARS, GO TO [CR.ORG/5YEARINDEX](https://www.cro.org/5YEARINDEX).

Safety systems	
back seat	Oct 20, 56
repair costs	Mar 20, 54
as standard equipment	Oct 20, 7
Smartphone integration	Feb 21, 15
Test drive tips	Apr 20, 99
Tires	Dec 20, 52
inflators	Aug 20, 63
ratings	Dec 20, 54
Top Picks for 2020	Apr 20, 8
Used cars	Apr 20, 82
under \$10,000	Nov 20, 62

## B-D

Baby cereal safety	Nov 20, 7
Bidets	Aug 20, 24
ratings	Aug 20, 27
Bike helmets	Jun 20, 14; Jan 21, 7
Blenders	Oct 20, 44
ratings	Oct 20, 53
Blood pressure monitors	Oct 20, 16
Boom boxes	Feb 21, 16
Bread makers	Sep 20, 14
Cable TV	
fee transparency	May 20, 7
money-saving tips	Jun 20, 42
Cameras, instant print	Jul 20, 15
Cauliflower pizza crusts	Jul 20, 21
Cell phones	
ratings	Sep 20, 45
service providers	Sep 20, 38
ratings	Sep 20, 44
Cleaning tips	
car interiors	Sep 20, 63
mattresses	Oct 20, 14
using vinegar	Sep 20, 15
Coffee, cold-brew	Aug 20, 13
Coffee makers, quick-brewing	Nov 20, 18
Computer keyboards	
& mice, ergonomic	Sep 20, 20
ratings	Sep 20, 24
Consumer Protections	Dec 20, 7
COVID-19	Jun 20, 7, 18
and diabetes	Jan 21, 34
free testing	Nov 20, 7
healthy eating	Feb 21, 42
liability immunity	Oct 20, 7
safe air travel	Jan 21, 7
safe holiday gatherings	Dec 20, 26
scams	Oct 20, 39
stress relief	Aug 20, 44
supplement schemes	Oct 20, 34
travel tips	Nov 20, 50
voting safely	Nov 20, 18
winter safety	Jan 21, 14
CR Recommended program	Jul 20, 6
Credit card strategies	Jul 20, 54
Data privacy	Mar 20, 7; Feb 21, 7
health	Sep 20, 7
Zoom	Jul 20, 9
Debt collection	Aug 20, 7; Feb 21, 7
Diabetes and COVID-19	Jan 21, 34
Digital divide	Aug 20, 7
Dishwashers	Mar 20, 19
ratings	Mar 20, 22
DIY home projects	Aug 20, 36
Drugs, dropped by insurance	Aug 20, 48

## E-G

Earbuds	
Apple AirPods vs.	
Samsung Galaxy Buds	Jun 20, 17
true wireless	Aug 20, 15
E-bikes	Jun 20, 13
E-books, free	Jul 20, 21
Electric toothbrushes	Oct 20, 18
ratings	Oct 20, 22
Ergonomic keyboards & mice	Sep 20, 20
ratings	Sep 20, 24
Eyeglasses	Mar 20, 15
lens coatings	Sep 20, 28
timeline	Jun 20, 14
Fast food	
healthy	May 20, 24
ratings	May 20, 31

Financial tips during coronavirus	Jul 20, 43
cash flow	Jul 20, 48
credit cards	Jul 20, 54
mortgages	Jul 20, 51
retirement savings	Jul 20, 45
Food	
coronavirus safety	Jul 20, 19
labeling	Oct 20, 7
pesticide in	Oct 20, 24
produce health risks	Oct 20, 28
plastic in	Jun 20, 26
"Forever chemicals"	
in food packaging	Nov 20, 7
in water	Nov 20, 26
Frozen meals	Aug 20, 28
ratings	Aug 20, 34
Furniture shopping	Feb 21, 34
store ratings	Feb 21, 40
Garbage disposals	Aug 20, 20
ratings	Aug 20, 23
Generators	
home standby	Sep 20, 16
ratings	Sep 20, 16
Gifts for \$50 and under	Dec 20, 13
Glasses	Mar 20, 15
lens coatings	Sep 20, 28
timeline	Jun 20, 14
Grape products	Jun 20, 14
Grills	May 20, 14; Jul 20, 38
ratings	Jul 20, 41

## H-I

Hair coloring kits	Nov 20, 16
Healthcare	May 20, 34
costs	Jun 20, 36
race adjustments	Dec 20, 46
Helmets, bike	Jun 20, 14
Holiday season timeline	Dec 20, 16
Home innovations timeline	Jan 21, 14
Humidifiers	Jan 21, 16
HVAC filters	Jun 20, 16
Inclined infant sleepers	Sep 20, 7
Insect repellents	Jul 20, 23
ratings	Jul 20, 25
Instant print cameras	Jul 20, 15
Insurance	
drugs, dropped coverage	Aug 20, 48
health	Jun 20, 36

## L-P

Laptops, bargain	Nov 20, 13
Lawn tools, battery-powered	Aug 20, 16
Mac & cheese	Dec 20, 16
Magnets in toys	Jun 20, 7
Mask tips	Nov 20, 15
Meal prep timeline	Feb 21, 14
Medical alert systems	Feb 21, 20
ratings	Feb 21, 22
Medical debt	Nov 20, 42
Medical race adjustments	Dec 20, 46
Minestrone	Feb 21, 17
Misinformation online	Nov 20, 19
Mixers, stand	May 20, 18
Moldy washers	May 20, 46
Money-saving tips	Dec 20, 32
Mosquito-borne diseases	Jul 20, 19
Multi-cookers	Oct 20, 44
ratings	Oct 20, 53
Oatmeal cups	Jan 21, 14
Online safety guide	Feb 21, 24
.Org domains	Aug 20, 27
Ovens, self-cleaning	Mar 20, 14
Password managers	Jul 20, 22
Patient care	May 20, 34
Pesticide in produce	Oct 20, 24
health risks	Oct 20, 28
Pet supply shopping	
Amazon vs. Chewy	Dec 20, 17
Photographing Black skin tones	Jan 21, 44
Pizza crusts, cauliflower	Jul 20, 21
Plastic	
in food	Jun 20, 26
recycling	Jun 20, 31
timeline	Jun 20, 32
Product safety secrecy	May 20, 7

Projectors	Sep 20, 13
Pumpkin nutrition	Nov 20, 14

## R-S

Reading on devices	Jul 20, 20
Refrigerator features	Sep 20, 46
Repainting home interiors	Sep 20, 18
Rice cookers	Jan 21, 17
Ring device user security	May 20, 17
Robocalls	Mar 20, 7; Jul 20, 9
Routers	Mar 20, 46
ratings	Mar 20, 51
Saving money	Dec 20, 32
Security systems, home	
Ring user security	May 20, 17
Siding	May 20, 20
ratings	May 20, 23
Skin cancer	Jul 20, 32
Slow cookers	Oct 20, 44
ratings	Oct 20, 52
Smart home products	Jan 21, 24
privacy and security	Jan 21, 27
ratings	Jan 21, 31
Smart speaker privacy	Oct 20, 16
Smartphones	
car integration	Feb 21, 15
Google Assistant translator	May 20, 14
money-saving tips	Jun 20, 44
ratings	Sep 20, 45
service providers	Sep 20, 38
ratings	Sep 20, 44
Smartwatches	Jan 21, 13
Smoothies	Aug 20, 17
Snow blowers	Jan 21, 20
Space heaters	Feb 21, 13
Sprinkler controllers	May 20, 13
Stand mixers	May 20, 18
Strawberry products	Aug 20, 14
Stress relief during COVID-19	Aug 20, 44
String trimmers	Jun 20, 21
ratings	Jun 20, 24
Student loans	Dec 20, 7
Sunscreens	Jul 20, 26
ratings	Jul 20, 35
Super Bowl, how to watch	Feb 21, 18
Supplements	
FDA oversight	Sep 20, 30
schemes	Oct 20, 34

## T-Z

Tea drinks	
labeling	Sep 20, 17
timeline	Sep 20, 14
Tech budget savings tips	Jun 20, 42
Tech company oversight	Feb 21, 7
Telemedicine	Aug 20, 17
Toaster ovens	Oct 20, 44
ratings	Oct 20, 52
reliability ratings	Oct 20, 15
Toiletries timeline	Oct 20, 14
Tools timeline	Aug 20, 14
Toothbrushes, electric	Oct 20, 18
ratings	Oct 20, 22
Toy magnets	Jun 20, 7
TV streaming	Jun 20, 52
free services	Jun 20, 49
TVs	Dec 20, 20
ratings	Dec 20, 23
Vacuums	Nov 20, 34
maintenance tips	Nov 20, 39
ratings	Nov 20, 40
Waffle maker ratings	Oct 20, 54
Washers	
mold problems	May 20, 46
ratings	May 20, 52
Water	
bottled, tested	Nov 20, 30
"forever chemicals" in	Nov 20, 26
WiFi extenders	Feb 21, 14
Wireless chargers	Oct 20, 13
Work-from-home setups	Jul 20, 18
Yogurt	Nov 20, 21
ratings	Nov 20, 24
timeline	Nov 20, 14
Zoom privacy	Jul 20, 9

# Some Fumbles for Super Bowl Sunday

You may want to take a pass on these game-day deals

## Don't Put This on Your Wings

We're guessing it won't smell or taste like your favorite sauce.  
Submitted by Alan Silver, Delray Beach, FL



## Budget-Busting Brew

At this price, there better be gold in that ale.  
Submitted by Kent Krisher, Fort Wayne, IN



## Maybe Not the Event You Planned

Definitely a lousy idea in the midst of a pandemic.  
Submitted by Sally Horn, via email



## That's One Pricey Pizza

We don't care if it's with everything—this pie is overpriced.  
Submitted by Aristeia Fenney, via email



SHARE

Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at [SellingIt@cro.consumer.org](mailto:SellingIt@cro.consumer.org) or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as the publication's name and date.

# Your Road Map to Easy Car Shopping

Save money, avoid car-buying hassles, and get the deal you want with **Build & Buy Car Buying Service**. Buyers save an average of \$3,189 off MSRP\* from a nationwide dealer network.



**SEARCH** for the car you want and see what others paid



**LOCATE** the dealership from our prescreened network of over 15,000



**COMPARE** real pricing from participating dealers



**SAVE** and drive home your car and your savings!

[cr.org/buildandbuy](https://cr.org/buildandbuy)

\*Between 1/1/19 and 12/31/19, the average savings off MSRP experienced by consumers who connected with a TrueCar Certified Dealer through the Consumer Reports Auto Buying Program and who were identified as buying a new vehicle from that Certified Dealer was \$3,189. Your actual savings may vary based on multiple factors, including the vehicle you select, region, dealer, and applicable vehicle-specific manufacturer incentives, which are subject to change. The MSRP is determined by the manufacturer and may not reflect the price at which vehicles are generally sold in the dealer's trade area, as many vehicles are sold below MSRP. Each dealer sets its own pricing.

